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Fishery Leaflet 258

Chicago 54, Ill.

August 1947

RETAILING FISH

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Fish retailing is the critical point in the distribution of fishery products as it is in the retail store that the consumer decides whether the products offered are satisfactory. The consumer's desire and ability to purchase fish of the species, quality, form, size, weight, and price offered, determine in the final analysis how much fish will be sold for home use.

The essentials for success in retailing fishery products are, in general, similar to those for any other retail business. Among the more important are adequate capital and facilities, competent salespeople, good management, and sufficient patronage. However, there are some conditions peculiar to fish retailing which must be taken into account. This report outlines certain principles and methods followed in many stores successful in retailing fish.

Location of market--Stores retailing fish should be located where patrons can shop in suitable surroundings. Nearby auto parking space and neatness of surrounding property and streets are factors conducive to success with some types of trade.

Appearance of market--Most people who pass a business establishment are prospective customers. The stores with attractive fronts, well-lighted windows, eye-catching displays, and well-painted buildings, attract favorable attention.

Care and handling of fish--Fish distributors must pay continuous attention to factors that contribute to high quality. The key to increased consumer acceptance and greater demand lies in obtaining good products and maintaining high quality until the product reaches the consumer. The following practices should be observed:

1. Examine shipments of fish immediately upon receipt for signs of spoilage or damage. Any fish of doubtful quality should not be sold. Stock in good condition should be repacked in finely-crushed ice. Empty containers should be disposed of at once or washed thoroughly before being stored, as they can become a source of undesirable odor, and will attract flies. Place frozen fish in freezing storage immediately upon receipt from the distributor.

2. Avoid rough handling. Bruises and punctures of the flesh tissues induce and hasten spoilage.

Note: This leaflet supersedes Spec. Mem. 2450-G, issued by the former Bureau of Fisheries.

3. When repacking fish, whether in shipping containers, storage compartments, or display cases, pack them in an orderly arrangement so that they will use the space efficiently and will not be pressed out of shape. In such an arrangement and in their natural shape they usually have the greatest display and sales value.

4. Ice fresh fish liberally, using finely-crushed ice. Fresh fish should be kept constantly at temperatures below 40° F. but not below 34° F. Keep fresh fillets and steaks in trays and allow for drainage.

5. Keep frozen fish at a constant temperature at 0° F. or below. Prevent thawing and refreezing or variations in temperature. These enlarge the ice crystals in the tissues, and tend to break down the cell structure of the flesh. Keep frozen fish solidly frozen.

Cleanliness and sanitation--Cleanliness is a requisite to success in operating seafood markets. The following practices should be observed:

1. Keep premises neat, scrupulously clean, free from insects and other vermin, and adequately ventilated. Dirty boxes, aprons, barrels and burlap have no place in a store retailing fish as they are unsightly and create odors offensive to customers and to employees as well. Wash knives and clean tables, trays and fixtures before and after using. Running water should be provided at the cleaning table. Care should be taken that flying scales and other objectionable matter do not soil adjacent equipment or customers' clothing.

2. Arrange for adequate disposal of waste. Covered, water-tight barrels, preferably of metal, should be provided. After disposal of the waste, barrels should be washed and disinfected.

3. Make floors as nearly waterproof as possible to prevent absorption of fish drippings. This substance is easily absorbed into wood and will collect in cracks and crevices, where it will decompose and produce offensive odors.

4. Keep employees neat and clean, with every effort being made to have their apparel spotless. Clean aprons and caps and a neat appearance appeal to all patrons.

Display and merchandising--In studies made by the Fish and Wildlife Service, it was found that, with few exceptions, stores in the higher-volume groups depend on proper care, display, promotion, and advertising to promote fish sales. Evidence clearly indicates that the volume of fish sales is related directly to the emphasis given in merchandising. The following merchandising practices are suggested:

1. Display merchandise attractively. Adequate display equipment, strategically located to attract the customers' attention, will increase sales. Freshen up displays from time to time to keep them neat. The use of nautical materials, aquaria, unusual specimens, and attractive signs will draw attention.

2. Examine fish periodically for "off" odors or other signs of spoilage. Don't sell spoiled or mangled fish.

3. Place neat signs strategically in the store and in displays to help both salespeople and customers find the desired merchandise. Information on prices, species, cuts for particular methods of cookery, and cookery information permit the customer to begin his selection, and, in some instances, even carry through a transaction without help of a salesperson.

4. Prepare fish as completely as possible for the customer's use. By cleaning, dressing, scaling, and cutting fish at the store, the task of preparation in the home is greatly simplified.

5. Wrap fish in one or more sheets of parchment or other waterproofed paper to prevent leakage.

6. In frozen food cabinets, keep the products well arranged. Satisfactory sales volume depends, in a considerable degree, on the way frozen fish are displayed and handled. In overcrowded cabinets, it is difficult for the customer to find the item wanted.

7. Advertise in circulars and newspapers to focus attention on fish. Recipes and other information on fish selection and preparation are of widespread interest to purchasers. Take advantage of seasonal occurrences in the fisheries which become news items. Tie in your advertising with such items as the first "run" of a given fish or the blessing of the fleet. Other events such as the beginning of Lent or the occurrence of certain Jewish holidays, offer opportunities for sales promotion.

Judging quality and selecting fish--The homemaker who buys fish only occasionally may have difficulty in accurately appraising quality, and therefore must depend, to some extent, upon the judgment of the retailer. In the commercial marketing of fish, producers and wholesalers gain considerable experience over a period of time in judging the quality of fish through the use of the senses of sight, touch and smell. Little trouble should be experienced in distinguishing between the various stages of freshness if the following factors are taken into account:

#### FRESH FISH

1. Whole, fresh fish, as a rule, should be rigid and the flesh should be firm. The presence of these factors is not only an indication that fish are almost certainly fresh but also that good handling methods have been used.

2. Odor should be mild. Fresh fish usually have a mild, fishy odor somewhat similar to that of seaweed, and a fish which has just been taken from the water ordinarily has no other odor. The odor becomes more pronounced with the passage of time.

3. Eyes should be clear and full. The eyes of fresh fish have a bright, transparent appearance that becomes cloudy and often assumes a pink color when fish are stale. When fish are fresh, eyes often protrude, but with increasing staleness they tend to sink.

4. Gills should be reddish in color. Gills of fresh fish are commonly bright red. The color gradually fades to a light pink, then to a gray, and finally to a brownish or sometimes greenish shade.

5. Skin should be shiny and the color unfaded. Immediately after a fish is caught, it often exhibits an iridescent appearance. Each species has certain characteristic markings and colors which fade and become less pronounced as the fish loses freshness.

#### FROZEN FISH

Frozen fish should be solidly frozen when sold. There should be no trace of browning about the edges, or dried-out appearance. These are caused by oxidation and dehydration, respectively, which impair the flavor and texture of affected parts.

Trained sales people--Clerks with a comprehensive knowledge of fish can be helpful in informing the average customer of the better cuts for particular types of cookery, aiding in good selection and suggesting good buys. While training or re-training will vary according to the particular job, the following factors should be emphasized:

1. The art of serving people in a pleasant way. Employees must be taught to sell in a prompt, efficient and courteous manner. Although some people are naturally more skillful than others, all can benefit by studying the arts and techniques of selling.

2. The characteristics and uses of the goods they are to sell. Salespeople should know the goods they are selling. A salesman who lacks knowledge of his goods has not the full enthusiasm he should have for them. It usually takes years of experience to acquire an adequate knowledge of certain classes of food products but an introductory course of instructions will give the employee the basic facts, and regular on-the-job training will speed up the learning processes.

Information on fish cookery--Teaching the homemaker exactly how to prepare fish and providing her with fishery products which are ready to cook are factors of utmost importance in the marketing of fish. In the promotional work the Service has conducted, it has been practically overwhelmed with requests for information on fish cookery. It is apparent the American people want to know how to prepare delicious fish dishes. Give them this information and they will buy more fish. Lack of knowledge of fish cookery is generally conceded in the trade to be a major impediment to greater consumption. Most foods must possess a pleasing taste if they are to enjoy a flourishing market. The constant problem of the fishing industry is to find a practical way to deliver to the consumer all of the natural flavor and palatability fishery products originally possess.

Providing the consumer with tasty recipes and menus for the preparation of fish creates business. Recipes on containers, wrappers, sales slips, or in newspaper and radio ads disseminate this information. Some business has been created by distribution of special cookbooks carrying the advertising of the dealer.

In conclusion, strive to keep customers satisfied. It is hard work, but is well worth the effort. It must be remembered that a customer is not dependent on the retailer, but that the retailer is definitely dependent on the customer. A customer, it must be realized, is not an outsider to the business; he is a vital part of it.

## CUTS OF FISH

Fresh and frozen fish may be marketed in a variety of cuts or forms, the more important of which are:

### Fin-Fish

Whole or round	Fillets:
Drawn	Single
Dressed	Butterfly
Pan-dressed	Sticks
Steaks	

### Whole or Round

Fish marketed whole or round in the form they come from the water usually are the types that keep as well or better without dressing (cleaning) or are small fish.

Before cooking, whole or round fish must be scaled, eviscerated and headed. The fins may be removed if desired. The fish are either split or cut into serving portions. Some small fish frequently are cooked with only the entrails removed.

### Drawn

Many varieties of fish are marketed drawn or with only the entrails removed. To prepare these for cooking, the fish are generally scaled and headed. The fins are removed, if desired, and the fish are split or cut into serving portions.

### Dressed

Dressed fish are eviscerated with the head and tail and usually the fins removed. Very large dressed fish sometimes are marketed in chunks or pieces. The smaller sizes are ready for cooking or may be split open. The larger sizes may be baked whole, but frequently are split or cut into steaks or similar serving portions.

### Pan-Dressed

Pan-dressed fish are the smaller sizes which are eviscerated and which may have the head, tail and fins removed. They may be split open along the belly or the back. They are cooked in this form without further preparation.

### Steaks

Steaks are cross-sections of the larger sizes of dressed fish. Each steak is about 5/8" thick and equal to one or more serving portions. Steaks are ready to cook except for dividing the very largest into serving portions. The cross-section of the backbone in the middle of most steaks usually is the only bone in this cut. It may be readily separated from the edible portion at any time after cooking.

## Fillets

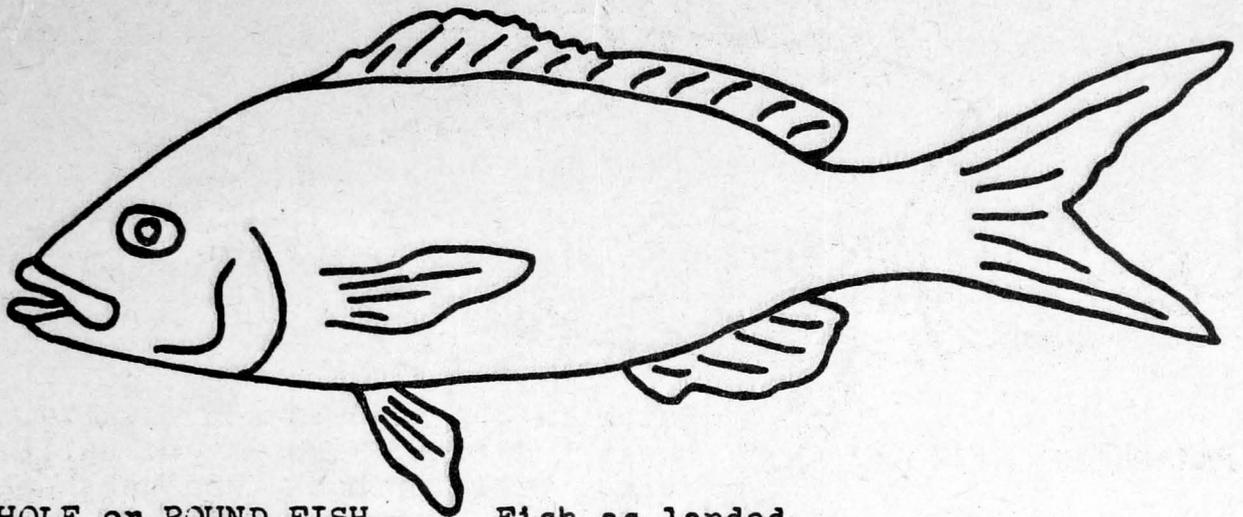
Single fillets are meaty sides of the fish cut lengthwise away from the backbone. They vary in thickness with the plumpness of the fish, and may weigh from several ounces to several pounds.

Butterfly fillets consist of single fillets held together by the uncut belly of the fish, with the backbone and fins removed.

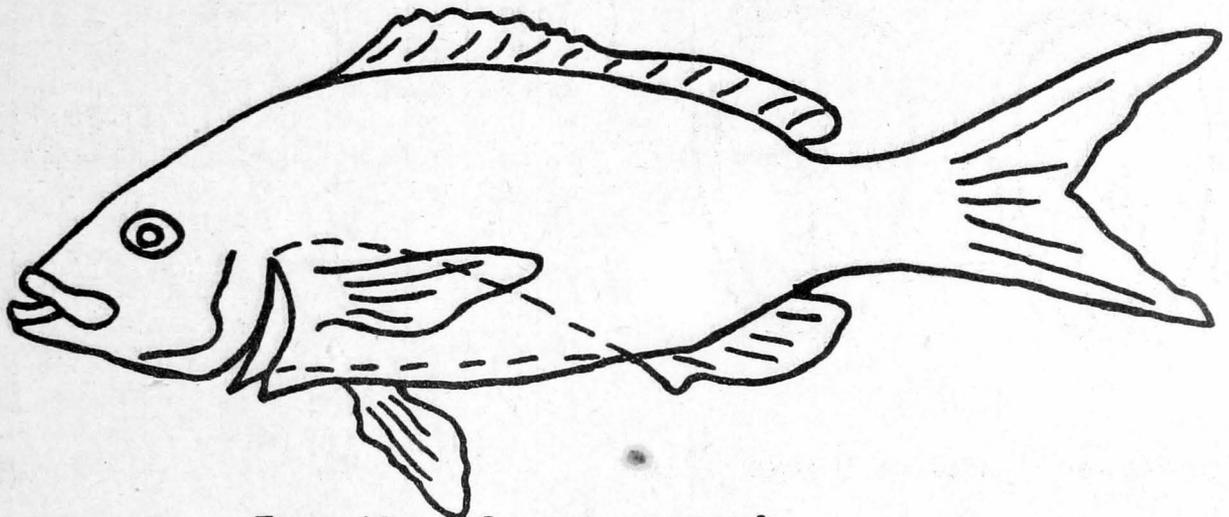
Sticks are portions of uniform length and thickness cut crosswise or lengthwise from fillets or steaks. Whiting sticks are frozen whiting with head, fins, viscera and skin removed but with the backbone left in.

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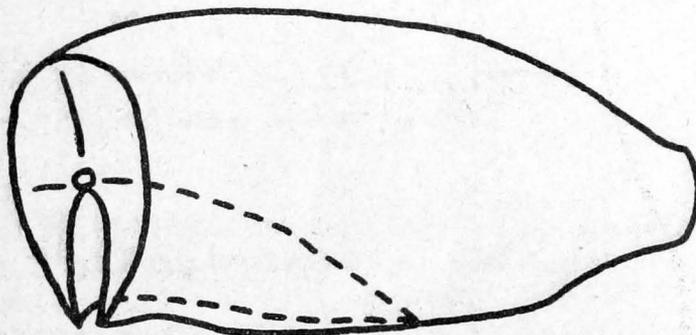
# Cuts of Fish



WHOLE or ROUND FISH - Fish as landed.

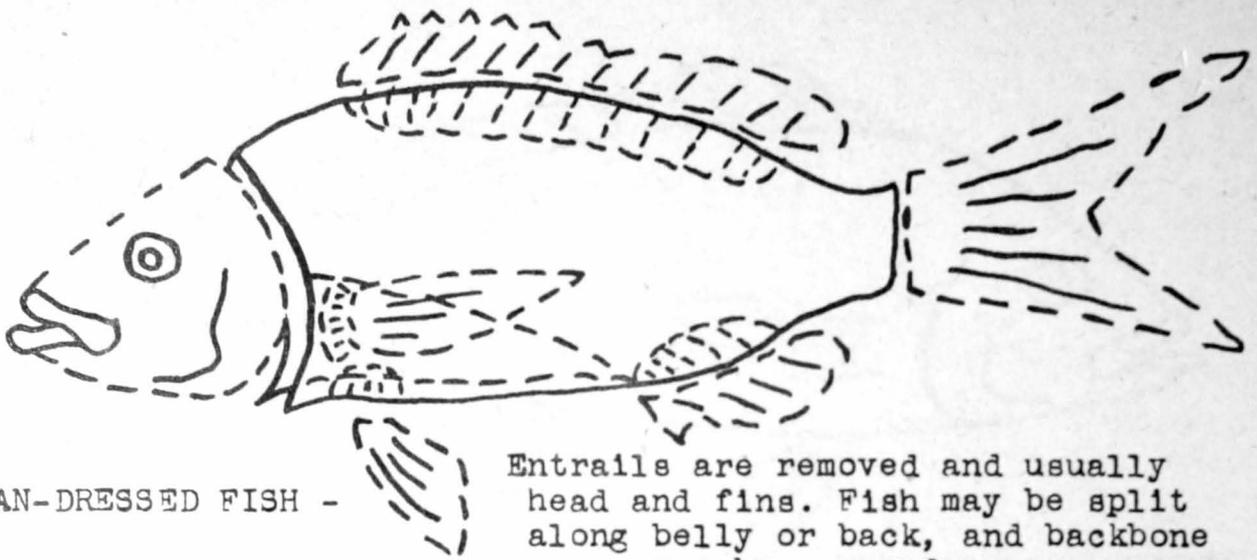


DRAWN FISH - Entrails only are removed.



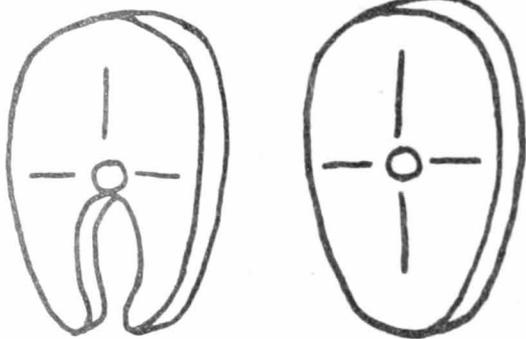
DRESSED FISH - Entrails, head and tail, and usually fins are removed.

# Cuts of Fish



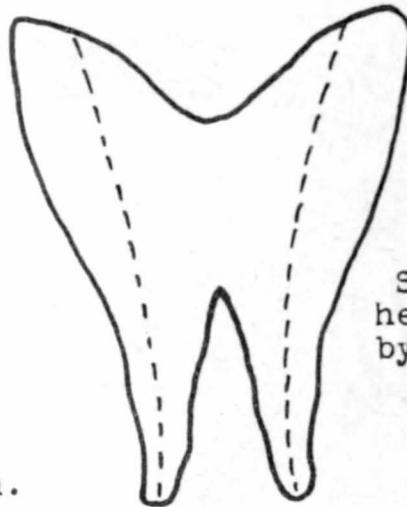
PAN-DRESSED FISH -

Entrails are removed and usually head and fins. Fish may be split along belly or back, and backbone may be removed.



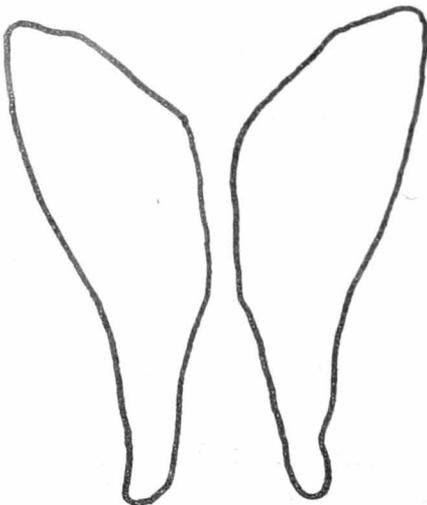
STEAKS

Cross-sections of larger fish.



BUTTERFLY  
FILLET

--  
Single fillets held together by uncut belly of fish.



SINGLE FILLETS -

Meaty, side of fish cut lengthwise away from backbone. Fillets are practically boneless.

STICKS -

Portions of uniform dimensions cut from larger fillets