Fish and Seafoods

Fish and seafoods comprise one of the most important branches of our natural food resources. No substitute has as yet been found to take their place in our diets. The boundaries of the United States—oceans, lakes, and gulf—and their tributaries are rich sources of sea foods including salt and fresh water fish of practically every description. If we would but learn the seasons and habitat of the various regions of the country, scarcity of sea foods would become a thing of the past.

Fish is marketed fresh and fresh frozen the year around. There is no food more palatable and delicious than fresh fish—when it is fresh. And it is not enough to know that it is fresh according to government specifications. Federal regulations permit a considerable leeway in this respect. For example, under government standards fish can be marketed as fresh from as much as twenty to thirty days after it is caught. Fish in this category is definitely not the fresh fish of which I am speaking.

Fresh fish—salt or fresh water—caught or hauled in daily by anglers and commercial fishermen is succulent and delicious. It has no equal in food value and palatability. Fish, like poultry, does not improve at all with age. However, in order to secure the best possible results under the circumstances fish must be kept clean and cold after it is caught until cooked.

Fish is a delicate product so if you don't know your fish you must know your fish dealer.

I describe here briefly the activities of a well-known Midwest establishment, Smith Bros., Port Washington, Wisconsin, as an illustration of first class care and caution in the handling of fish.

When they draw their nets and load the fish on the tugs the fish are immediately placed on ice and kept there until they reach port. As soon as they reach port the crew cleans the fish—washing them in clean clear water—and packs them in a fresh, clean batch of ice—not that in which they were brought from lake to port. The fish are kept in this new cold pack until they are ready for shipment to markets around the country.

In preparation for shipping, the bottom of the box is covered with ice and parchment paper laid on the ice. The fish is placed on a layer of parchment and covered with another layer. The box is finally filled with ice and the product is ready for its journey.

When the fish reaches its destination it is in good condition. It is clean and cold but not water-soaked. What is more it does not have that old fish-house smell from dirty fish-boxes and dirty ice.

Regardless of how fish comes shipped to you it should be thoroughly washed, cleaned and cooked as soon as possible or frozen. If fish has once been frozen and thawed, however, it should never be frozen again.

All fresh fish should be firm and should readily respond when pressed with the finger. You can depend on it—fresh fish will never contain bad odor.

On many occasions fish that is marketed as "fresh frozen fish" might have been spoiled before it was frozen. A careful check should therefore be made with respect to bad odor in order to be sure that you are getting the product you want.

FISH COOKERY

After cleaning fish well some should be well scaled; others should be skinned. Some should be cooked with skin on. Still others, like salmon and large trout, should be skinned before cooking. Whitefish, walleyed pike, perch, red snappers, large black bass, and many others should be scaled. Halibut, flounder, and cod fish should be cooked with skin on for flesh protection.

All fish should be cooked well done. Practically all fish require only short time for cooking. Be that as it may they should be cooked well-done in order to develop the best flavor.

Low temperature in cooking fish, as in cooking meat, is imperative. Thick fish such as salmon, and trout—to mention only a couple—should be baked at a temperature of not more than 300°F. until done.

Deep fat frying—the most popular method of cooking fish—should be done at 375°F. Temperature control should be
carefully watched. It is just as bad to fry fish in fat that is below the appropriate temperature as it is to fry fish in fat that is too hot.

**Broiling**

Broiling brings out the very best qualities in fish. Either small whole fish or split fish of medium size are best for broiling. Fillets or fish steaks may also be broiled.

To prepare for broiling, wipe fish dry, brush lean fish with salad oil, butter, French dressing or melted shortening. Season with salt and white pepper.

Preheat broiling compartment 5 to 10 minutes. Arrange fish, skin side down, on greased pan. The regular broiler pan may be used or a separate shallow pan may be kept just for cooking fish. Place fish about three inches from the flame and broil until tender and well-browned. It is usually necessary to turn split fish of medium or inch-thick steaks. The broiling time will vary with the size and variety of fish. A 2 to 3 pound fish, split, will take 10 to 15 minutes; an inch-thick fish steak will take about 15 to 20 minutes.

Before serving, marinate the broiled fish with butter, dill mixed with butter, chopped parsley butter, or tarragon.

**Boiling and Steaming**

If a fish is rather dry, boiling or steaming is the best method of preparation. This method is especially recommended for thick steaks cut from large cod or halibut.

In boiling, the whole fish or individual pieces should be tied in a parchment bag and placed thus in the boiling water. This method will preserve flavor and texture, keep fish in shape, and prevent water soaking. All seasoning will need to be put directly on the fish in this method.

If parchment for such a bag is not available, it is advisable to cut large fish in pieces for individual service before cooking. Put the sections of fish on a plate; tie this in cheesecloth and plunge it into hot water. To boil medium-sized fish whole, wrap twine around the body leaving the head and tail out of the water, and a length of twine at the head end which can be used in removing the cooked fish from the kettle.

When not using parchment, cook fish gently in boiling water to which salt, a little vinegar or lemon juice, a few peppercorns and a kitchen bouquet of parsley, celery tops or other available herbs have been added. Vinegar or lemon juice helps to keep fish texture firm and prevents white fish from discoloring.

Fish may be steamed by placing on a rack just above the boiling water. A pressure cooker is an excellent means for steaming.

**Baking**

Larger fish, of three pounds or over, are suitable for baking. In this class are bluefish, red snapper, black cod, salmon, shad, and whitefish. They may be stuffed or not as desired. Lean varieties of fish should either be larded or constantly basted with fat or oil while baking. To lard, cut several gashes through the skin and insert thin strips of fat pork. Fatty fish need no additional fat or oil.

Fish may be baked with or without the head and tail. Remove the bones and sprinkle with salt inside and out. Fill with any desired stuffing and fasten securely with toothpicks or with needle and thread.

If a piece of cheesecloth dipped in salad oil is placed underneath the fish in the baking pan, it will be easier to handle the fish when cooked. Bake in a hot oven, 375°F. to 400°F., allowing 15 minutes per pound for a fish weighing up to four pounds (before trimming). Allow 5 minutes for each additional pound. Test for tenderness with sharp-pronged fork. Remove from the pan to the hot platter or plank. Garnish as desired.

If desired, fish for baking may be filleted and the stuffing heaped on the two fillets placed side by side on the bottom of the baking pan. Bake at 375°F. to 400°F., allowing 8 minutes per pound.

Fillets may be put together with stuffing between and baked like a whole stuffed fish, or they may be braised, cooked in a covered pan in cream or rich milk.

**Breaded Fish**

Take two parts corn meal, one part flour, season with salt and white pepper. After the fish is thoroughly cleaned roll in the above mixture and lay on table or place on wax paper for ten minutes. Fry in equal parts of butter and lard—enough fat to cover half the fish. When well browned on one side, turn and brown on the other side. The fish will be cooked if it has not fried too fast. Cook in hot fat about 370°F.

To use bread or cracker crumbs rather than the corn meal, use two parts bread crumbs, one part flour, and season with salt and white pepper. The fish should be
cleaned thoroughly and dipped in plain flour. Next dip fish in a batter made of 1/2 cup water, 1/2 cup milk, 1 well-beaten egg, salt and white pepper. Roll in bread crumbs. Let stand on flat surface for ten minutes, then fry.

**Grilled Fish**

Lightly oil or butter surface of fish or fillets and be sure fish is well-dried before starting to grill. Turn fish or fillets twice or four times, according to size and thickness while cooking as both sides should be cooked evenly. The use of wooden tongs is recommended so as to prevent the fish from breaking. Begin with a fairly slow heat and finish off a little faster to brown fish evenly. One or two cuts across a whole fish will enable the inside to cook more readily. The grill may be wiped with oil or butter before fish is placed on it.

**HOME-MADE PICKLED FISH**

Many of us have turned up our noses when there is mention of pickled fish. Probably we have encountered samples of this delicacy which have been rubbery and tough, tasted strong and bitter. I have experimented with pickling brines and have found one that leaves the fish flaky and tender. Follow this recipe and the fish will not become bitter or sour.

2 cups water
1 quart tarragon or mixed herb wine vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons salt
1 teaspoon whole white pepper
1 teaspoon whole black pepper
2 cups onion rings
2 cups celery, sliced
1 teaspoon red hot peppers
1 teaspoon leaf thyme
1 teaspoon whole allspice
1 teaspoon juniper berries
3 crushed bay leaves
1 tablespoon sweet marjoram
6 pounds fish, whole or pieces—trout is best. Small pieces of trimming may be used.

Add the above spices to the vinegar and sugar. After the fish has been washed and cleaned it should be soaked in salt water (1 cup per gallon) for six hours. Then it should be placed in the boiling pickle brine and heated until it comes to a boil, then simmered slowly for 5 minutes. Cool. The fish should be kept in the brine in a tightly sealed container for at least 24 hours, under good refrigeration.

**MOLDED FISH SALAD**

(Serves 70 As Appetizer)

The following two steps are worth anyone’s continued practice until one is able to produce the proper results, because they are admired and accepted by discriminating people as the best in cold fish cookery.

**Step I—Pickled Salmon or Trout**

1. 5 pound Salmon
2. 1/2 cups tarragon wine vinegar
3. 1 cup water
4. 2 tablespoons salt
5. 1 teaspoon celery seed
6. 6 allspice
7. 1 cup sliced celery
8. 1/2 cup onion, sliced
9. 2 tablespoons sugar

Mix all spices and vinegar and bring to a boil.

Prepare fish, salmon or trout, by splitting into halves, removing bones and skin. Put the boneless slabs in a long loaf pan. Cover with the above hot pickling brine and simmer for 10 minutes, or until tender. Let it cool in the brine.

**Step II—Chaud Froid Fish Mold**

Remove pickled slabs of fish from the cold brine. Marinate the fish in a glaze prepared as follows:

3 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons gelatin (soaked in 1/4 cup water)
2 cups brine

The fish mold may be garnished with ripe olive slices for simulating scales, stuffed olives for eyes, and pimiento. Use the following procedure: Work with the mold placed in a dish of ice and first line the mold with a thin layer of glaze. Then dip the garnishes in the glaze and arrange in the mold. When they have jelled in the mold, add another thin layer of glaze and proceed with the Chaud Froid Sauce.

**Prepare Chaud Froid Sauce as follows:**

2 cups mayonnaise
1 cup pickling brine
3 tablespoons gelatin
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Method: Soak gelatin in 1/2 cup cold brine. Heat 1/2 cup brine to boiling point and add to soaked gelatin. Fold into mayonnaise.

Line mold with the prepared Chaud Froid Sauce. Add the fish in flaked pieces or whole—but it must be pressed together and well-covered with the sauce. Chill until firm. Serve.
CRAB A LA NEWBURG  
(Serves 4)
2 heaping cups crab meat  
½ cup butter  
2 cups cream  
2 tablespoons flour  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
4 eggs  
¾ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon clove  
½ teaspoon paprika  
½ cup dry sherry  
1 tablespoon brandy

Melt butter in iron skillet but do not brown. Stir in crab meat gently. Sauté for 1 minute; stir in flour. Add cream slowly, stirring constantly and lightly. When sauce is smooth, add salt, clove and paprika, and let mixture bubble for five minutes.

Have guests seated at the table; have piping hot serving dish, hot plates and toast points ready.

Stir in the sherry. Beat eggs just short of Foaminess and stir in quickly. Add the brandy and lemon juice. Rush Newburg garnished with parsley, instantly to the table. Serve with any dry white wine and any green salad made with French dressing. (Brandy may be omitted, but not the sherry.)

BAKED HADDOCK WITH EGG SAUCE  
(Serves 2)
1 pound frozen haddock  
salt and pepper to taste  
cracker crumbs for topping  
1 cup medium cream sauce  
2 hard boiled eggs  
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Put fish in a shallow pan, sprinkle with salt and pepper and the coarse cracker crumbs (enough to cover). Bake in 350°F. oven until tender. Force eggs through a sieve or ricer, add to the cream sauce, add chopped parsley, and when fish is tender pour the sauce over it and return to oven to continue baking until the sauce bubbles.

BROILED LOBSTER TAIL  
1 lobster tail  
½ cup cracker crumbs  
½ cup melted butter  
1 teaspoon seasoning salt  
1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Thaw lobster over night in the refrigerator. While still in frigid stage remove the soft under shell and remove the muscle or meat from the shell and de-vain it and remove the tough outer skin. Wash under cold running water. Season lobster with seasoning salt and butter (melted). Return to the shell and sprinkle with buttered crumbs and bake according to size from 16 to 24 minutes. Garnish with chopped parsley, lemon and melted butter. Serve immediately.

They may be steamed until tender and then finish baking the same way by a flash broiler heat.

FISH A LA KING  
(Serves 6)
2 tablespoons butter  
½ cup onions cut fine  
1 cup celery cut fine  
½ cup sliced green pepper  
2 ounces mushrooms  
2 cups medium cream pepper  
4 cups cooked, flaked fish  
¼ cup sherry wine  
4 ounces of pimientos  
salt and pepper to taste

Melt butter in frying pan and use it for sautéing onions and celery until they're translucent. Remove them from pan and sauté the green peppers and mushrooms. Put fish, onions and celery into a buttered casserole. Add sherry to cream sauce and pour over them. Put green pepper, mushrooms and pimiento on top and bake in a 350°F. oven until sauce bubbles well.

OYSTERS SUPREME  
(Serves 4)
½ cup butter  
1½ cups chopped celery  
½ teaspoon mustard  
¼ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon white pepper  
3 tablespoons flour  
3 cups rich cream  
2 dozen oysters  
¼ cup sherry

Sauté celery in butter until it is almost done, but do not brown. Add mustard, salt, pepper and flour and cook, stirring constantly. Add cream gradually, stirring and cooking until mixture thickens and bubbles. Add well cleaned oysters, cooking about 5 minutes longer. Add sherry and serve garnished with parsley.
ESCALLOPED OYSTERS  
(Serves 4)  
1 quart oysters  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 cup fine bread crumbs  
4 tablespoons butter  
1 cup milk  

Drain and save, the liquid from the oysters. (Be sure they’re free of shell and sand.) Place a layer of oysters in a buttered baking dish, sprinkle with salt, and cover with a layer of bread crumbs. Repeat with another layer of oysters, salt and crumbs. Dot with butter, add oyster liquid and just enough milk to cover the top layer of oysters. Bake in a 350° F. oven until edges of the oysters curl and the top is lightly browned.

SALMON CROQUETTES  
(Serves 4)  
2 cups cooked salmon  
2 cups cooked rice  
4 tablespoons cracker crumbs  
4 tablespoons milk  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon white pepper  
¼ teaspoon MSG  
1 large egg, beaten  

Mix salmon, rice and cracker crumbs together in one bowl. Mix milk, seasonings and beaten egg together in another. Blend well and pour over the salmon mixture. Stir until well blended. Allow to chill in the refrigerator for 2 hours. Shape into croquettes, roll each one in flour, then in a batter made of the following: 1 well beaten egg; ½ cup milk; ½ cup water. Then roll each croquette in cracker crumbs. Let stand for 10 minutes, then fry in deep fat until brown. Serve with Pea and Celery Cream Sauce.

SHRIMP STUFFED PEPPERS  
(Serves 4)  
1 egg, slightly beaten  
¼ cup French dressing  
1 cup cooked rice  
½ pound cooked shrimp  
¼ cup grated cheese  
4 whole green peppers  

Mix the first four ingredients thoroughly, adding salt and pepper to taste. Remove tops of peppers, remove membrane and seeds, wash and drain. Stuff cavities with shrimp mixture, top with grated cheese and bake in a 375° F. oven for 30 to 45 minutes.

SHRIMP CREOLE  
(Serves 6)  
1 pound shrimp  
1 teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon white or red pepper  

Remove the shell and sand vein from shrimp. Wash clean under running water. Place in stew kettle with just enough water to cover. Add salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and cook for 5 minutes. Drain and save the juice.

SAUCE:  
1 cup minced onions  
2 tablespoons butter  
½ cup green pepper, cut fine  
2 tablespoons flour  
½ cup mushrooms, sliced  
½ cup stock or juice from shrimp and 2 tablespoons ham cut fine (optional)  
2 cups canned tomatoes  
½ cup tomato puree  
½ teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon sugar  
½ teaspoon salt  

Saute onions in butter until soft and translucent. Add green pepper and cook for a few minutes. Add flour and cook until it makes a paste with onions, green pepper and mushrooms. Add the hot stock, tomatoes and tomato puree and stir. Bring to a boil with all other ingredients and cook over low fire or in double boiler; mix with shrimp and serve on cooked rice. Use 3 cups of cooked rice for 6 portions.

SALMON STEAK WITH WINE SAUCE  
Select 6 fresh, or fresh frozen salmon steaks (about 1½ pounds). Wash well, making sure the skin is free of scales. Arrange steaks in buttered baking dish, sprinkle with 2 teaspoons of salt and a little white pepper. Dot with butter, sprinkle with cracker crumbs, and bake in a 350° F. oven until almost, but not quite, done. Remove from oven and add the following sauce:

1 cup cream sauce  
½ cup light sherry  
¼ teaspoon monosodium glutamate  
1 teaspoon salt  

Blend ingredients well. Spoon over salmon steaks, top each steak with 3 or 4 capers, a little chopped parsley, and melted butter. Return to oven and bake 10 minutes longer.
FINNAN HADDIE IN WINE SAUCE  
(Serves 6)  
2 pounds smoked Finnan Haddie  
2 cups heavy cream sauce  
5 tablespoons sherry  
½ teaspoon seasoning salt  
Soak fish in scalding water for 2½ minutes. Drain and put fish in a buttered casserole. Bake 15 minutes in a 350°F. oven. Remove from oven, drain off the juice that has accumulated on the fish. Blend the juice with the cream sauce, add the sherry and salt, pour over fish, return to oven and bake 15 minutes longer.

LOBSTER AND SCALLOP THERMIDOR  
(Serves 4)  
2 cups cooked lobster  
2 cups cooked scallops  
¼ cup sherry wine  
1 cup of stock from lobster and scallops  
2 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons flour  
CREAM SAUCE  
1 cup coffee cream  
2 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons flour  
For thermidor sauce use one cup of stock from lobster and scallops and thicken with butter and flour which has been made into a Roux. Cook together until thick.

For cream sauce heat coffee cream in double boiler. Melt butter and add flour and cook to a Roux. Add Roux to hot cream and cook until thick.

Now mix thermidor sauce and cream sauce together and add sherry. Add cooked lobster, cut in pieces the same size as scallops, and scallops to sauce. Then put in casserole dish and sprinkle with grated cheese and melted butter and bake for about 20 minutes in a 350°F. oven.

SALMON LOAF  
(Serves 4)  
1 number 2 can of salmon  
2 beaten eggs  
1½ cups bread crumbs  
1 cup milk  
¼ teaspoon seasoning salt  
Drain fish juice from salmon and add it to the eggs. Flake the salmon. Add salmon, crumbs and seasonings to the combined eggs and juice. Mix well, and fold in the milk. Bake in a loaf pan (not more than 1½ inches deep) in a 375°F. oven until it is set and browned lightly over the top. Serve with Pea and Celery Cream Sauce.

SALMON PATTIES  
(Serves 4)  
1 seven ounce can of salmon  
2 cups cooked rice  
1 egg, beaten  
½ cup bread crumbs  
1 teaspoon seasoning salt  
additional crumbs for breading  
Beat egg, add juice drained from the can of salmon, add rice, bread crumbs and the flaked salmon. Mix, shape into patties, roll in the additional crumbs and fry until golden brown.