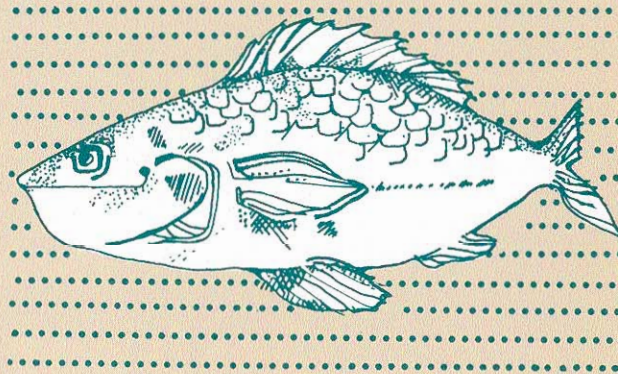


# FISH FILLETING



*"When the wind is in the West,  
that's the time that fishin's best,"  
goes part of an old saying among  
weatherwise fishermen. If you are a  
fisherman, you know the thrill of the  
catch and the pleasure of eating a  
freshly-caught fish. And you also  
know that as soon as that fish leaves  
the water, it begins to deteriorate.  
Of all flesh foods, fish is the most  
susceptible to oxidation and hydroly-  
sis (breakdown) of fats and to micro-  
bial spoilage. PROMPT treatment is  
necessary to preserve it by any means.*

*You can't drag dead fish on a  
stringer behind the boat for several  
hours and then expect them to have an  
excellent flavor later in the day.  
Fish are like any other kind of food.  
CARE must be given to preserve the  
flavor and keep them from spoiling.*



---

*In general, small fish are more  
perishable than larger ones, and  
deterioration in dressed fish is  
slower than in whole fish; but the  
latter are spoiled more readily by  
bacteria. Also, these changes occur  
more rapidly at summer temperatures  
and more slowly as the temperature is  
lowered toward freezing.*

**By Charlotte Dunn**  
**Food Science, College of**  
**Agricultural & Life Sciences,**  
**UW-Madison**

*Copyright 1987*  
*Board of Regents • University of*  
*Wisconsin System*  
*Sea Grant Institute*

---

*Published by the University of*  
*Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute*  
*under grants from the National*  
*Sea Grant College Program,*  
*National Oceanic and Atmo-*  
*spheric Administration, U.S.*  
*Department of Commerce, and*  
*from the State of Wisconsin. Fed.*  
*Grant NA80AA-D-00086, Project*  
*AS/A-2.*

*Sea Grant Pub. WIS-SG-74-117*  
*Reprinted 1987*

---

**Cost: 20¢**

**This publication is available**  
**from:**

**Sea Grant Communications**  
**University of Wisconsin**  
**1800 University Avenue**  
**Madison, WI 53705**

**Phone (608) 263-3259**



*Strong tasting fish generally means improperly cared for fish. Fish should be cleaned and chilled as quickly as possible after the catch. In warm weather, once the water temperature has warmed up considerably, it is best for safety and quality of the fish to clean them right after they are caught and place them on ice in a cooler carried for that purpose. A good idea is to carry plastic bags for the fish fillets to hold in natural flavor and juices.*

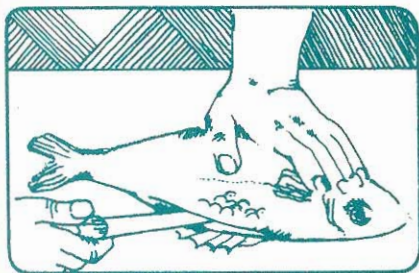
*Wash the fillets with cold water. To preserve the tasty juices and keep meat in its firm, natural state, avoid overwashing — do not flood with a hard running faucet or hose. Fillets can easily be dried with a cloth or paper towel.*



*A good sharp knife can last a lifetime with proper care. To do its job, it must be kept sharp. Electrical and mechanical knife sharpeners will quickly give your knife a good cutting edge, but it will rapidly wear away. Although it takes more time and skill, the sharpening stone (or hone) is the most effective. This is especially true when the task is completed with a few strokes on a butcher's steel to set the blade's fresh edge.*

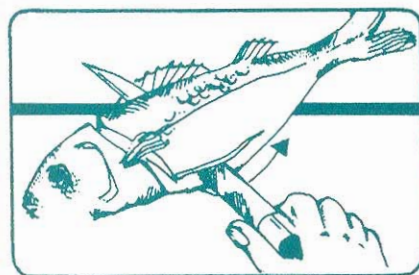
*Use either a wet or dry stone. Either water or a drop of salad oil on the stone helps float away the metal particles and cut a finer edge. Work slowly and deliberately.*

*To avoid warping the handle, never let a knife with a wooden handle stand in water. Always dry your knife after rinsing and store separately in a dry scabbard.*



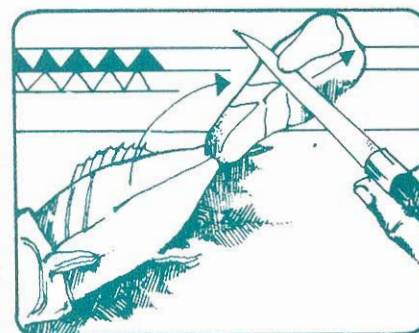
1

Make a cut down to backbone just behind gills. Turn knife and slice straight along backbone, not quite to tail.



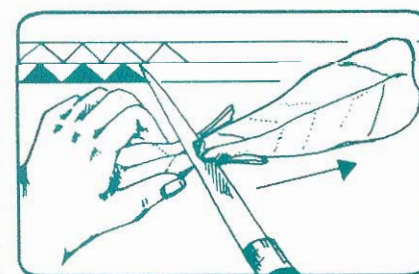
2

Cut along each side of the anal and dorsal fins for length of fish. (This step is unnecessary for small fish.)



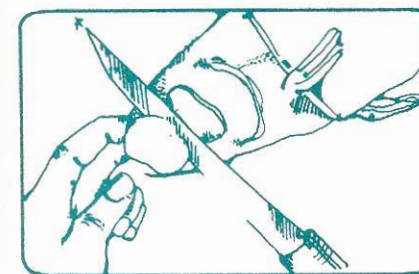
3

Flip fillet away from body of fish. Remove rib section by inserting blade close to tail end of rib bones and shave entire section away.



4

To remove skin, grip body of fish with one hand. With knife in free hand, insert blade between skin and meat close to tail. Draw along fish to free fillet.



5

The cheeks are the "fillet Mignon" of the fish. For larger fish (only) slice into the cheeks and scoop out with blade. Peel off skin.

... REPEAT STEPS 2-5 FOR OTHER SIDE OF FISH...