

# a Fish Hater's guide to Loving Fish

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**That smell.  
Those eyes.  
Them bones.**

It can only be one thing...  
fish! Have no fear.

We've got a 10-point plan  
that'll transform it from your  
worst nightmare into your  
greatest catch of the day.

# 1

## “I only like fish sticks.”

Think outside the box—literally. If you like fish sticks, guess what? You like fish! Specifically, you’re into cod and pollack, which have light, flaky flesh and a mild, slightly nutty taste, qualities that have helped make them two of the most popular fish on the planet. But kicking store-bought sticks doesn’t mean you have to stray too far from the familiar. Making them from scratch gives you way more control over quality, ingredients and fat.



### Crispy Baked Fish Sticks

SERVES 4 PREP 10 MIN BAKE 10 MIN

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cups panko, toasted
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 3 eggs
- 1½ pounds boneless cod or halibut fillets, cut into ¾-inch-thick strips

1. Spread the oil on a baking sheet and position on a rack in the upper third of the oven; preheat to 450°.
2. In a large bowl, combine the panko, salt and cayenne. In another bowl, beat the eggs. Coat the fish with the seasoned panko, dip in the beaten eggs, then recoat with the panko; transfer to a plate.
3. Arrange the fish on the preheated pan and bake, turning once, until just cooked through, about 10 minutes.

➔ Can’t quit the convenience of store-bought sticks? Dress them up with homemade tartar sauce.

#### Cucumber-Dill Tartar Sauce

In a small bowl, combine 1 cup each mayonnaise and finely chopped seedless cucumber, 1 tablespoon each chopped fresh dill, chopped capers and lemon juice, and ¼ teaspoon pepper.

#### Double-Smoked Tartar Sauce

In a small bowl, combine 1 cup mayonnaise, ¼ cup sweet pickle relish, 2 slices finely chopped cooked bacon, 2 teaspoons sweet smoked paprika and 1 teaspoon lemon juice.

#### Cajun Tartar Sauce

In a small bowl, combine 1 cup mayonnaise, ½ cup finely chopped dill pickles, 1 tablespoon prepared horseradish and 1½ teaspoons Cajun seasoning.



# 2

## “Fish stinks!”

If it smells, it’s not fresh. Take that single piece of knowledge with you when you’re shopping for fish. Fresh, uncooked fish should smell pleasant—at most, faintly of the sea. And if the guy behind the counter gives you trouble for asking to smell his fish, you have our permission to tell him *that stinks!*\*

- ➔ Back home, make sure to cook your purchase right away. Fish doesn’t have the same shelf life as meat or poultry, so it’s at its best when prepared on the day you bought it.
- ➔ If you must keep your fish overnight (more than one is not advised), store it on a bag of ice in the back of the fridge. Steaks and fillets should be wrapped tightly in a layer of plastic wrap first, but whole fish can be laid directly on the bag of ice.

\* Actually, most fishmongers are very nice, so don’t be afraid to ask for help.



### GLOSSARY

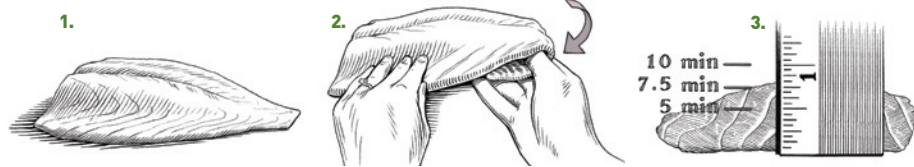
WILD-CAUGHT...IT WAS CAUGHT THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY: BY A FISHERMAN. COLOR-ADDED...IT WAS FARM-RAISED AND FED AN ADDITIVE TO MAKE ITS FLESH A PRETTY COLOR.

3

## “I haven’t a clue how to cook it.”

Actually, you’re probably worried about overcooking it, right? It’s one of the big reasons many first-timers are turned off to fish forever. Fish is best when cooked the least. Ideally, most fish should be cooked just through—or very slightly underdone. (It’ll finish cooking on the plate.) Start with steaks and fillets that are of an even thickness. If a fillet has a much thinner section (FIGURE 1), fold it under to ensure even cooking (FIGURE 2). Cook 10 minutes for every inch of thickness (FIGURE 3). A ¾-inch-thick fillet, for instance, needs 7 or 8 minutes. You’ll know it’s done when you can easily pull the flakes apart with a fork. When in doubt, take its temperature dead center with an instant-read thermometer—135° is a good place to stop. Carryover heat will get it to 140°, great for most fish. (The exception to this rule is tuna, which is best served rare or medium-rare.)

→ Tuck the tapered end under to create an even thickness throughout.



## “I only cook Italian.”

4

Well, that’s great, because fish is fluent in Italian. Since you dig pasta, swap a flounder fillet for the noodle in your favorite spinach-stuffed manicotti recipe. If Mexican is your thing, make mahi-mahi tacos with shredded cabbage and mango salsa. Or maybe you’re just a big fan of meat and potatoes. In that case, you can always make schnitzel with a catfish fillet instead of a veal cutlet.

buon appetito!



5

## “They ought to call it fish!”

True, some catches are pricey, but you can stretch their value. A pound of swordfish is enough to make kebabs for a family of four, and a half-pound of tuna, seared and thinly sliced, is the perfect topping for a family-size niçoise salad. But more important, not all fish is expensive (hello, flounder, brook trout and tilapia!), and even the most humble variety can be dressed up with seasonings and sauces.

→ Trick out tilapia with crispy pancetta and sage; slather flounder with a lime-chipotle butter. Or try this gussied-up brook trout recipe:

### Stuffed Brook Trout

SERVES 4 PREP 30 MIN BAKE 15 MIN

- ¼ cup almonds, toasted
- 3 cups cubed Italian bread
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ¼ cup dried currants
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- 4 brook trout, heads removed and deboned

1. Preheat the oven to 425°. Using a food processor, chop the almonds; transfer to a bowl. Add the bread to the food processor and process into coarse crumbs; combine with the almonds.
2. In a skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir into the bread mixture, along with the currants, parsley and lemon peel; season with salt and pepper.
3. Working on a parchment-paper-lined baking sheet, open the trout like a book and season with salt and pepper. Divide the stuffing among the trout and fold to enclose. Bake until the fish is opaque at the thickest part, about 15 minutes.

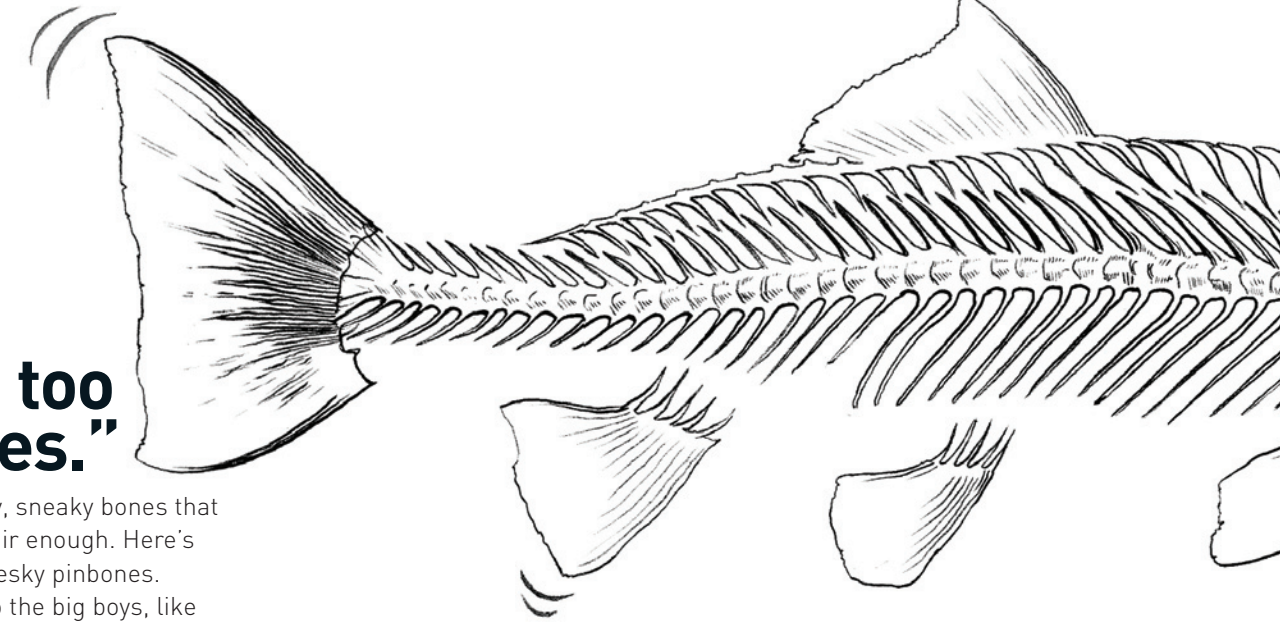


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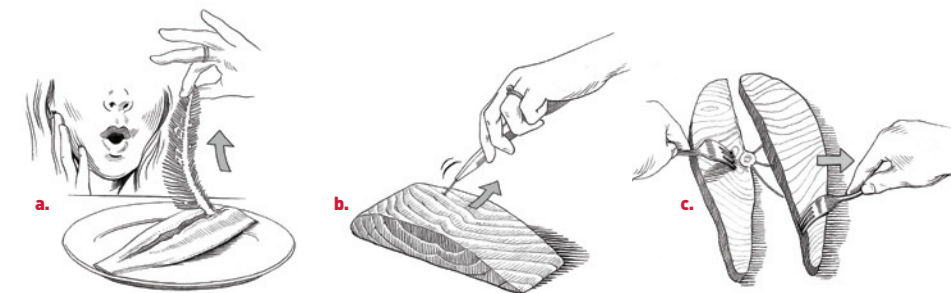
## “There are too many bones.”

What’s that? Fish have tiny, sneaky bones that appear out of nowhere? Fair enough. Here’s how to get around those pesky pinbones.

1. Eat more steak! Stick to the big boys, like tuna, marlin and swordfish, which are rarely sold as anything other than boneless steaks.
2. Buy bone-free fillets. Plenty are sold deboned (tilapia and flounder, for example). Ask your fishmonger—she knows.
3. Learn some fishy anatomy. Larger fish like salmon and halibut have a few prominent bones in both their fillets and steaks, but they’re always in the same place. Once you learn where to look, they’re easy to pluck out every time (see our illustration).



→ a. Amaze your friends: Remove the bones from a cooked rainbow trout in one piece! b. Pluck the pinbones from an uncooked fillet with tweezers. It’s easier than removing a splinter. c. Play doctor with a cooked salmon steak: Pull the side fillets apart, leaving the bones in the center.



7

## “Does anybody eat those little fishes crisscrossed on top of a Greek salad?”

Those would be anchovies, which lots of folks love for the salty punch they add to salads and pizza. On very rare occasions you might find them fresh, but most often they come in tins and jars packed in oil or salt. Preserved anchovies are definitely an acquired taste. But you’ve probably had them if you’ve eaten a caesar salad, where they’re blended into the dressing.



### Caesar Salad

In a food processor, coarsely chop 3 large garlic cloves and 4 anchovy fillets. Add 1 hard-boiled egg yolk, ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, 3 tablespoons lemon juice, 1½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce, 1 teaspoon dry mustard and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper; process until smooth. In a large serving bowl, toss 2 heads of romaine, torn, with the dressing and ½ cup grated parmesan.



8



## “I don’t eat anything that can stare back at me.”

♥ Along with a neutral scent, the eyes are the best way to spot a fresh fish. The more lifelike—round, clear and moist—the more likely you’re looking at something just off the boat, so consider yourself lucky if you’re able to see eye to eye with your potential purchase. Of course, you don’t have to bring it home that way. Your friendly fishmonger can remove the head. Staring contest averted.

9

## “Believe me, I’d love to eat fish, but all I ever find is frozen.”

♥ You’re in luck: Sometimes frozen is better than fresh. Freezing a fish immediately after it’s caught—right on the boat—locks in the best possible taste and texture before it has a chance to fade. This means a longer shelf life, fewer safety concerns and usually a less expensive fish, too.

➔ Most markets buy lots of frozen fish, which they thaw out for display (hence the label “previously frozen”). If you’re not planning to cook it that night, ask for a fillet that’s still frozen. That way you can thaw it out\* whenever you want. Instant fish dinner!

\* Thawing frozen fish isn’t difficult. If the fish is sealed in plastic, let it thaw overnight in the fridge or, if you need it now, place the bag in a bowl filled with cold water.



10

## “Eww, skin!”

♥ We understand that it looks a bit reptilian, but there’s no reason to panic if your fish shows a little skin. In fact, it’s a good thing. Skin protects the flesh against extreme temperatures—whether it’s a bed of ice or hot coals. It’s also easily removed (by you or the fishmonger). Plus, you can always eat it...

➔ Yes, you can eat the skin. Any of the thin-skinned fish are quite tasty. Just don’t eat any of the thicker, more leathery skins found on fish like swordfish or grouper.



### Super-Crispy Salmon Teriyaki

SERVES 4 PREP 5 MIN COOK 10 MIN

- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Four 6-ounce skin-on boneless salmon fillets
- Salt
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 scallion, thinly sliced

1. In a saucepan, combine the soy sauce, honey and vinegar. Bring to a boil and simmer for 1 minute. Stir in the garlic.
2. Season the salmon on both sides with salt. Preheat a large, heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add the oil, swirling to coat, then add the salmon, skin side down, and cook, undisturbed, until the skin is very crisp, about 6 minutes. Turn and cook until opaque at the thickest part, 1 to 3 minutes.
3. Drizzle serving plates with the sauce, place the salmon, skin side up, on top and sprinkle with the scallion.

