

Sustainable Seafood Resource & Recipe List

by Chef Alex Levine

Highland Park Public Library, July 25, 2022

Local Seafood

- **Cornell Local F.I.S.H. Initiative's [list of local fish](#)**
 - Albacore, Tuna
 - Bluefish
 - Black Sea Bass
 - Butterfish
 - Cod, Atlantic
 - Dogfish
 - Eel, American
 - Flounder (Summer, Winter, Yellowtail)
 - Haddock
 - Hake, Silver (Whiting)
 - Hake, Red (Ling)
 - Herring
 - Mackerel (Atlantic, Spanish)
 - Mahi-Mahi
 - Mako
 - Monkfish
 - Pollock
 - Porgy (Scup)
 - Puffer, Northern
 - Sea Robin
 - Skate
 - Squid, Longfin
 - Striped Bass
 - Swordfish
 - Tautog (Blackfish)
 - Thresher
 - Tilefish
 - Bigeye, Tuna
 - Bluefin, Tuna
 - Skipjack, Tuna
 - Yellowfin, Tuna
 - Wahoo
 - Weakfish

- **Cornell Local F.I.S.H. Initiative's [list of local shellfish & crustacean](#)**
 - **Shellfish**
 - Mussel, Blue
 - Northern Quahog (Hard Clam)
 - Sea Scallop
 - Oyster, Eastern
 - Bay Scallop
 - Surf Clam
 - Knobbed/Channelled Whelk
 - **Crustacean**
 - Blue Crab
 - American Lobster
 - Jonah Crab
 - Rock Crab

Sustainability

- Cornell Cooperative Extension's "[Choose Local F.I.S.H.](#)" program
- "[Understanding Bycatch](#)" site from NOAA
- "[How to Make Sustainable Seafood Choices.](#)" published in *Edible Jersey* magazine, July 13, 2018.
- "[De-Coding Seafood Eco-Labels: Why We Need Public Standards.](#)" published by Food & Water Watch, © 2010

How to Choose Fish

- Whole Fish:
 - Bright, not dull, eyes
 - Red, not brownish gills.
- Fillets:
 - Should be shiny
 - The "bloodline" should be red, not brown.
 - Defrosted fillets will look spongy and fibrous. They will never yield the flaky texture you'll get from fresh product.

Where to Buy Fish

Down the Shore

- Buy fish from most any fish market down the shore that's affiliated with a small processor on Barnegat Bay.

Best indies in New Jersey State (that I've been to and aren't up and down the shore).

All three of these answer the phone and will attempt to find what you ask for if you call ahead:

- [River Road Clamhouse](#), Lower Bank, NJ (Egg Harbor City)
- [Big Catch Seafood](#), Mt. Holly, NJ
- [Metropolitan Seafood](#), Lebanon, NJ

Local Markets.

[Catch of the Hamptons](#) at [Highland Park Farmers Market](#)

- Fabulous quality and selection, and commensurately high prices.



**HIGHLAND PARK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



Sustainable Seafood, 7/25/22

Wegman's and Whole Foods:

- Wegman's has a better selection, especially of whole fish, than Whole Foods. I recently found whole porgy, whole black bass, and whole mackerel, all in great shape.
- Both of these "high-end" supermarkets you will find more frozen fish than fresh, more pre-seasoned ready-to-cook fish than naked, and counter help who aren't experienced fishmongers and can't help much with cleaning, cutting, and skinning.

Large Asian Supermarkets ([H Mart](#) Edison, [Kam Man](#) Edison, [99 Ranch Market](#) Edison, [Asian Food Market](#) Plainsboro or Piscataway):

- Most of the product is defrosted.
- Tilapia and Basa are farmed under not very clean conditions.
- Very talented counter service, though.
- If the fresh "Sea Bass" (farmed) look good, they are a fine choice.
- Fresh mackerel, sometimes.
- And if you want to mess around with squid, this is the place to buy it.

In my own area (Princeton):

- [Nassau Street Seafood](#) has a great selection, always fresh (because they cycle their product into their restaurant), but at scary prices. They will get you what you need with advance notice.
- [McCaffrey's](#) has a small, high-quality selection. Here you can find local monkfish, local bluefish filets, local flounder.
- [ShopRite of South Brunswick](#) is my preferred place to buy oysters and clams, as their fish counter is busy and turns over the product quickly. Plus, they have soft-shell clams, i.e "steamers" or "piss-clams."

Local 130 Seafood:

- Wholesale/Retail outfit in Asbury Park that delivers. As fine and fresh as anything in the region. Irreproachable integrity.

Books

- [Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World](#), by Mark Kurlansky
 - Kurlansky also wrote a picture book for kids called [The Cod's Tale](#).
- [The Encyclopedia of Fish Cookery](#), by A. J. McClane
- [North Atlantic Seafood](#), by Alan Davidson



**HIGHLAND PARK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



Sustainable Seafood, 7/25/22

Tips for Reducing Fish Smell When Cooking (or, Don't Stink Up Your House!)

Grilling outside:

Best option is to grill outside.

Frying:

- Cut fish into small-ish pieces.
- Open the windows and doors, turn on kitchen fan and bathroom fans, create cross-ventilation.
- Fry quickly, in small batches, in a sufficient amount of oil, heated to 350° to 375° F.
 - Measure the temperature of the oil with a thermometer that goes up to 350 or 400° F, or better yet, an infrared thermometer.
- Leave windows open for a while after you're done cooking.

Baking:

- Oven at 375°.
- Use convection feature if you have it.
- Make sure fish is patted dry before you cook it (less fishy steam).
- Place rack at top of oven.
- Switch oven to broil for one minute at end of cooking.

Poaching:

- Maybe the best choice, and best done in the oven.
- Cook fish in glass dish, tightly covered with foil, in 375° oven.

Sautéing:

- Don't do it! This will spray fishy droplets of oil or butter all over the place. As far as I go is the stew that is featured in this presentation.

Notes for Beginners:

Why don't you try a 2-pound bag of frozen whiting fillets, available at most supermarkets. This is an inexpensive, sustainable, sweet and versatile fish; the fillets lend themselves to everything except grilling. Perfect for experimenting.



Notes on Equipment

Fish Spatula

Check out this [Serious Eats review of fish spatulas](#)

Thermometers (for frying and other uses)

An oldster, I was weaned on thermometers with dials. One type worked from -20 to 220 fahrenheit. Another went all the way up to 500 fahrenheit. State of the art now are digital thermometers that go from below zero to upwards of 500 fahrenheit. They are in the \$30 range. But old-fashioned thermometers can be found in hardware stores or restaurant supply stores for under \$10.

Notes on Shrimp & Scallops

Shrimp and scallops are sold by an interesting and somewhat counter-intuitive numbering System:

- Shrimp, fresh or frozen, will be labeled “16-20,” or “26-30,” or “31-40.” These numbers refer to how many pieces are in a pound, so that one pound of “26-30” shrimp will contain no fewer than 26 and no more than 30 pieces. The lower the number, the bigger the shrimp.
- You may encounter something like “U-10,” which means Under ten per pound. These are the really big ones that are best to peel, marinate lightly in oil, lemon juice, and salt and pepper, and grill. If they are fresh, you get a lobster-like result.
- Scallops are generally sold not with the weight range, but with the “U” categorization. The lower the “U” number, the bigger the scallops.

The fresh North Carolina Shrimp you will see in our markets this summer are likely to be in the 16-10 or 21-25 range. The simpler they are cooked, the more you can enjoy their sweetness and shrimpieness (see recipe below).

Other notes about shrimp:

- I don't recommend buying cleaned shrimp. Better to buy shrimp that you have to peel yourself.
- A nice compromise is “EZ-Peel” shrimp, which are deveined but still have the shell on. Cook them with or without the shell.
- If you remove the shell...save the shells and make a quick stock by rinsing the shells, covering them with water in a small saucepan, bringing them to a boil, then straining and keeping the delicious stock to use to cook rice or pasta, or to incomparably enrich a seafood soup.



Recipes by Chef Alex Levine

Grilled Swordfish Steaks

1. Fresh is far better than frozen. Ask fishmonger to remove skin (you will remove bloodline after it's cooked).
2. Bring fish to room temperature. Heat grill to honking hot.
3. Brush a bit of oil on both sides of fish. Sprinkle top with salt and pepper.
4. Place fish on grill, salted side down.
5. After 3 minutes, use your fish turner to lift fillet and turn 90 degrees (This will achieve the famous "quadrillage").
6. Cook for 3 more minutes.
7. Sprinkle on more salt and pepper, then flip fish.
8. Turn grill down to medium, close cover, and cook for five minutes.
9. Cut into to fillet, gently, to see if it's done to your liking. Cook a bit longer if necessary.
10. Serve immediately with lemon slices, or...ooh baby...with sea-urchin compound butter.

Fried Shrimp *(or other fish, like flounder or cod or even monkfish)*

1. Cut shrimp or fish into $\frac{3}{4}$ " pieces, so they'll cook quickly.
2. Rinse well and leave a little wet so the flour will stick.
3. In a medium bowl, mix:
 - o 2 cups flour
 - o $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp white pepper
 - o 2 pinches cayenne
 - o $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda
 - o 1 TBSP corn starch (optional).Mix well and taste. Add salt if you think it needs it. Really...it's a matter of how salty you like your fried fish.
4. Toss pieces of shrimp or fish in flour to coat very well. Then toss again to coat even better. Strain in a colander.
5. Heat a mixture of shortening and plain oil (vegetable, corn, canola) until 350 or 375 degrees F.
6. Carefully drop pieces of fish into oil. Make sure temperature of pan does not drop.
7. Cook fish until golden brown and remove to a rack above paper towels.
Try not to eat what you've cooked before you share it with your guests.



**HIGHLAND PARK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



Sustainable Seafood, 7/25/22

Baked Bluefish Fillets

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Put a few shards of butter on the pan. Place fillets, skin side down, atop the butter.
2. Sprinkle fillets with salt, pepper, and paprika, and top with a few more shards of butter.
3. Bake on top rack in 375 oven for 10 to 14 minutes, depending on thickness of fillets.
4. Switch oven to broil and cook for one more minute.
5. Serve with lemon slices.

You and your guests can decide whether to eat, or set aside, the bloodline and the skin.

Cod Fillets in Creamy Tomato Sauce

1. Make your own tomato sauce, or use a jarred product, and whisk in a bit of cream.
2. Remove ribs from Red Chard, and blanch leaves in boiling water until soft.
3. Wrap 4 oz pieces of cod in Chard leaves.
4. Put ½ inch of sauce in bottom of baking dish.
5. Place cod-and-chard “packets” in dish, and spoon sauce from dish on top of “packets.”
6. Cover tightly with foil, and bake in 375 oven for twelve to fifteen minutes, depending on thickness of cod fillets.
7. Enjoy with crusty bread and white wine.

Al’s Amazing Seafood Stew:

Shrimp, clams, ¾” chunks of monkfish

1. Dice:
 - 1 medium or 1/2 large onion
 - 5 large cloves garlic
 - ½ jalapeño pepper
 - ½ green pepper
 - 2 roma tomatoes
2. Sauté all but tomatoes in a generous amount of oil with salt.
3. Add tomatoes, some hot water, and ½ cup white wine (optional) and cook 3 minutes. Stir very well until it’s a bit emulsified.
4. Add fish and clams, bring back to medium boil, cover and simmer 10 minutes, until fish is cooked and clams are open.
5. Serve with White Rice.



**HIGHLAND PARK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



Sustainable Seafood, 7/25/22

Simple Poached Shrimp:

1. Don't clean or peel the shrimp. Simply rinse them well and allow them to come to room temperature.
2. Bring plenty of water to a boil. Salt lightly, add some lemon zest or half a lemon, a few peppercorns and maybe a bay leaf and maybe a smashed clove of garlic.
3. Drop shrimp into the water. Bring back to the boil.
4. Turn off and cover for 5-10 minutes (the longer period of time for larger shrimp, the shorter for smaller).
5. Then drain and cool in running water...you've got your peel'n'eat shrimp. Enjoy plain, or with lemon, or with cocktail sauce, or with curry mayonnaise, or with...?

You can also check out these [Recipes from Cornell's Local F.I.S.H. Initiative](#).



**HIGHLAND PARK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



Sustainable Seafood, 7/25/22