



Culinary Categories

There are a great many species of fish in the sea, and each one is unique and wonderful in its own way. But you can easily categorize them into a half dozen buckets based on their general culinary attributes, such as texture, flavor, fat content, and color.

Within each of these culinary categories, you can use the species interchangeably in most recipes. This gives you the opportunity to buy whichever fish looks the freshest on any given day because, while you may not know that particular type of fish yet, you have known (and cooked using the recipes in this book) many others like it. You'll see that some species span two different categories, for example catfish can be either flaky and white or meaty and dense, depending on how the fish is treated in the recipe, which determines the outcome of the texture. This is by no means a precise categorization, but merely a reference for you to follow so that any of the recipes in this book can be used to prepare multiple types of species of seafood.

Not all seafood can be easily grouped with like seafood. Species such as clams, squid, or lobster are unique enough to stand alone as culinary categories.

Fillet Fish usually fit nicely into a large sauté pan. The flesh has a moderately high level of fat, and fillets are often cooked with their skin on, which helps the flesh retain its moisture when cooked. Generally, you can tell fillets are cooked when their flesh is uniformly opaque. When cooked, the fillets tend to have a snappy, slightly elastic texture and are pretty medium- to fullflavored.

Acadian Redfish, Barracuda, Barramundi, Bigeye, Black Bass, Bluefish, Bluegill, Boxfish, Branzino, Butterfish, Croaker, Cutlassfish, Dory, Drum Black/Red, Flying Fish, Freshwater Bass, Grouper, Grunt, Jack, Lionfish, Mackerel, Mullet, Pacific Rockfish, Parrotfish, Perch, Pike, Pompano, Porgy, Redfish, Salmon, Scup, Shad, Sheepshead, Skate (or Ray), Snapper, Splendid Alfonsino, Spot, Striped Bass (small), Tautog, Tilapia, Tilefish, Triggerfish, Tripletail, Trout, Walleye, Weakfish, Wolffish, Wrasse, Wreckfish, Yellowtail (aka Hiramasa/Hamachi)

Flaky White Fish, in general, have a lean texture and a large, curved flake when cooked. Their flavor is quite mild. You can usually tell a flaky white fish is fully cooked when it flakes under gentle pressure.

Acadian Redfish, Alaska Pollock, Barrellfish, Black Driftfish, Bowfin, Carp, Catfish, Cod, Cusk, Dab, Dogfish, Flatfish, Flounder, Grenadier, Haddock, Hake, Halibut, Lingcod, Lionfish, Lizardfish, Pacific Rockfish, Perch, Pollock, Remora, Sablefish, Sculpin, Sea Robin, Skate, Snakehead, Tilapia, Whitefish, Whiting, Wolffish

Meaty Dense Fish require long, slow cooking times because they typically have a high amount of connective tissue or have a texture akin to steak when raw. Their flavor is robust enough to hold up to these longer cooking times as well as hold their own when paired with strong flavors. When these fish are cooked, they feel springy to the touch.

Amberjack, Barrellfish, Black Driftfish, Blowfish, Bowfin, Carp, Catfish, Cobia, Cusk, Dogfish, Grouper, Lingcod, Lizardfish, Mahi Mahi, Marlin, Monkfish, Opah, Remora, Scorpionfish, Sea Robin, Sculpin, Shark, Snakehead, Striped Bass (large), Sturgeon, Swordfish, Tautog, Wreckfish, Wolffish, Yellowtail (aka Hiramasa/ Hamachi)

Orange-Fleshed Fish comprise the salmon category of fish, where the pigment of their flesh gives away their direct connection. They have a medium-firm texture, most often coupled with a delicate flake. While widely recognized as being higher in (good) fats than other fish, the exact level of fat in each species within this category does vary. When cooked, the flesh is opaque but can be slightly rare toward the center. The flesh will flake with gentle pressure. Some species in this category are distinctly not orange; these are included here, as their general flake, fat content, and culinary character are similar to species easily identified by their orange color, and thus are interchangeable in recipes.

Arctic Char, Opah, Sablefish, Salmon varieties (King, Sockeye, Coho, Chum, Pink, and Atlantic), Steelhead Trout, Wolffish

Small Silver Fish are rich in flavor and healthy fats, and are most often eaten whole, bones and all. You usually find them cooked or cured in cans or jars, but if you find them fresh and cook them yourself, you know they are done when the skin is just starting to break apart and you can see the flesh is uniformly opaque.

Anchovies, Eulachon, Herring, Mackerel, Sardines, Smelt, Whiting

Steak Fish are large fish that are almost never sold whole but are cut into cross sections or steaks. They commonly have a full, rich flavor and a sturdy structure most often defined by concentric rings. These steaks can be cooked to doneness according to taste.

Mahi Mahi (sold as fillets), Marlin, Sharks, Sturgeon, Swordfish, Tuna (Albacore, Bonito, Blackfin, Bluefin, Yellowfin, Bigeye/Ahi), Wahoo

A Note to Inland Seafood Lovers While there are certainly many celebrated species that swim in our inland waters, most still conform to the general culinary qualities of our coastal fish. I list some popular inland fish, and you can use this to reference applicable recipes. Some species, like carp and catfish, though, deserve their own entries.