**Consumer Tips**

**Purchasing and Handling Tips**

**Getting It Fresh**

Your nose knows. When it comes to selecting fresh fish and shellfish, don't hesitate to smell it. A fishy odor is your first sign that the seafood is not as fresh as it should be. Here are a few other simple test for freshness every shopper should know:

**For Finfish**

In general, the flesh should be firm and elastic. Press it with your finger. It should feel tight and spring back without leaving a permanent indentation. If the finfish you want is under glass, feel free to ask your fish professional to show it to you.

* A fresh fish will also have gills that are clean and red, not muddy gray or white.
* Fillets should have a firm texture and should have minimal flaking or separating.
* Steaks should appear moist, not dry or yellowed.

**For Shellfish**

* Live lobsters and crabs should move when touched; lobster tails should curl under, the shells hard and heavy.
* Oysters, clams and mussels should "clam up," holding their shells together tightly. Oysters should sound solid when tapped.
* Shrimp should feel firm to the touch with shells snugly attached.

**Keeping It Fresh**

To preserve the freshness of your seafood until it's cooked, take it home immediately and store in your refrigerator. For best results, use fresh seafood within one to two days of purchase. If you need to freeze your fish, wrap it tightly in plastic wrap and overwrap with foil or freezer paper, or dip the fish into water, freeze and repeat until a coating of ice has been formed.  
Storage

Do not allow frozen seafood to thaw until you are ready to use it. Refreezing seafood will severely alter its quality. Wrap seafood in a moisture-proof paper or enclose it in an airtight container. Do not store seafood wrapped only in waxed paper or plastic wrap. Frozen seafood may be stored up to 30 days in a home freezer at 0 F or lower.

**Thawing**

It's best to thaw seafood overnight in the refrigerator. Place wrapped package on a plate or shallow pan to catch any liquid that drips out. Allow 8-10 hours (extremely large cuts may take a bit longer). NEVER allow seafood to thaw at room temperature or place it in warm water to thaw. You can use the microwave to thaw seafood quickly. Place the fish in a microwave roasting rack set in a shallow pan or plate. Make sure the thicker portions of the fish are positioned toward the outside rim so they receive the most energy. Microwave one pound of seafood on defrost (30% power) for 9 minutes for steaks or fillets, or 6-8 minutes for crab. Turn fish fillets, steaks and crab frequently during thawing. Allow 1 minute of standing time between every 2-3 minutes of microwave time to ensure most even defrosting.

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**How Much to Buy**

Deciding how much seafood to buy depends upon how you intend to prepare it and the desired size of individual servings. The quantities listed below are good portions for an adult entree. Smaller quantities should be used for appetizers and casseroles where other ingredients are included.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Seafood Type** | **Serving Per Person** |
| Whole Fish | 1/2 lb. - 1 lb. |
| Fillets | 5-7 ozs. |
| Steaks | 6-8 0zs. |
| Live Lobster | 1 small to medium |
| Lobster, Meat | 1/4 lb. - 1/3 lb. |
| Oysters | 1/2 dozen |
| Scallops | 6-8 ozs. |
| Shrimp, Peeled | 6-8 ozs. |

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**How to Cook & Eat Shellfish**

**Snow Crab**

**Saute'** - Start with serving size pieces of snow crab in the shell. Melt butter, margarine or oil in a pan, stir in snow crab and saute' lightly for 3-5 minutes, until heated through. When sauteing with other ingredients, add crab in the last five minutes of cooking.

**Steam** - Fill a large pot with 3/4" of water. Place a steam basket in pot and bring to a boil. Place thawed snow crab in basket; reduce heat, cover and steam for about five minutes, until crab is heated through.

**Broil** - Place snow crab on a broiler rack 5" from heat for five minutes, until heated through.

**Microwave** - Place thawed snow crab on a microwave-safe plate and cover with plastic wrap. Microwave on high for 4-5 minutes, until heated through.

**Grill** - Place snow crab on a well-oiled grill above hot coals for five minutes or until heated through.

**Easy to Eat**

**Cracker Method** - The classic method is to use a crab cracker and a cocktail fork to extract the meat from the legs.

**Snap 'n Eat** - Using a serrated knife, lightly score each leg section crosswise (at the widest section of the leg) before serving. This enables you to break them open with your fingers.

**By Hand** - Snow crab are soft, making them relatively easy to break open with your hands. Bend the joints back and forth until the sections separate. Then extract the meat with small cocktail fork.

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**Some Hot Tips for Grilling Seafood**

**Prepare the Fire**

**Starting the fire** - Group briquettes into a pyramid and ignite. When the flame has died down and coals are covered with gray ash (about 40 minutes), spread coals in a single layer with a surface area slightly larger than the food being grilled.

**Temperature** - Fish cooks best over a medium-hot fire; shellfish require a hot fire. The proper temperature for a medium-hot fire can be determined by holding your hand 3" above the grill. The heat should be intense enough to force you to move your hand in about 2 seconds.

**Controlling the fire** - Keep a toy squirt gun or spray bottle handy to extinguish flare-ups.

**Covered cooking** - For a smokier flavor, cover the grill during cooking. Adding water-soaked hardwood chips to the fire adds subtle seasoning variations. Woods such as mesquite, hickory, maple and oak add the most distinctive flavor.

**Gas & Electric Grills** - These grills provide a smooth, even source of heat. Since neither gets as hot as a wood or charcoal fire, it's safe to use the highest heat setting. Turn on the heat source about 10 minutes before cooking to heat up the grill.

**Preparing the Grill**

**Cleaning** - Always start with a clean grill. After each use, clean the grate with a steel brush while it is still warm.

**Coating** - To keep seafood from sticking to the grill, slice a raw potato in half length-wise. Once the grill is hot, slide the cut potato down the grill in one direction only. It should make a loud hissing noise. The starch from the potato will coat the grill and act like a natural form of Teflon.

**Heating** - Make sure the grill is hot before you start cooking.

**Preparing the Seafood**

**Sizing** - Cut large loin steaks or fillets into meal-size portions before grilling. They cook faster and are easier to handle.

**Preparing** - Oil fish very lightly just before cooking. A large portion may be wrapped in a strip of bacon, much as you would a filet mignon. This bastes the fish while holding it together.

**Turning** - Turn seafood only once. When cooking fish fillets, always start with the skin side up. If the skin has been removed, the skin side will appear slightly darker. By cooking this way, the natural fat carried beneath the skin will be drawn into the fillet, keeping it rich and moist. When turned, this leaves the more attractive side up for a perfect presentation.  
For easy turning, use a two-prong kitchen fork inserted between the grill bars to slightly lift the fish, then slide a metal spatula under the fish and turn.

**Timing** - Avoid overcooking. Seafood changes from translucent to opaque as it cooks and continues to cook slightly when it's removed from the heat. Cook fish 10 minutes per inch of thickness. Remove when just opaque throughout.

Crab, such as king, snow, or Dungeness, should be placed on the grill for about 5 minutes. When grilling prawns and scallops, use a hot grill and cook quickly. Large butterflied prawns need to cook only one minute per side.

**Seasoning** - Seafood is delicious with a wide variety of herbs and seasonings. Baste your seafood with Italian salad dressing, white vermouth, lemon juice, or even mayonnaise blended with garlic and seasonings.

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**Lobsters**

[Lobster Cleaning and Eating Instructions](https://www.dixonsseafood.com/files/lobsterinstr.gif)

**Cooking Instructions** - To boil a lobster, submerge it head-first into rapidly boiling water. Cover immediately. From the time the water boils again, allow from 12-25 minutes, according to size. Properly prepared, a lobster's meat is white and firm. Serve with butter and a wedge of lemon.

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| --- | --- |
| Time Chart | |
| 1-1 1/4 pounds | 10-12 minutes |
| 1 1/2-2 pounds | 15-18 minutes |
| 2 1/2-5 pounds | 20-25 minutes |

**Cooking Methods**

**Frying**

Panfrying is perfect for small, whole fish and fillets. It's also one of the simplest methods of cooking. We suggest dipping your clean, dressed fish into a seasoned seafood frying mix. After coating, fry fish, following the directions on the frying mix.

**Microwaving**

Microwaved fish is tender, moist and filled with flavor. The ultimate speed and convenience of microwaving is perfect for fish in a flash! Do NOT follow the "10 minute rule" when microwaving. Instead, cool three to four minutes per pound for thawed fish and seafood. Add lemon butter and dill seasoning for flavor before cooking. It's the perfect complement for microwaved fish. Microwaves cook at different speeds, check for doneness after about 2/3 of the time has elapsed. If it easily flakes with a fork, it's cooked.

**Easy to prepare**

For the following cooking methods, allow 10 minutes of cooking time per inch of thickness, measuring fish at its thickest part, or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

**Bake**

Season fillet or steak with salt, pepper and herbs or dredge in seasoned flour. Place in buttered baking dish and bake at 450 F pre-heated oven.

**Broiling**

Fillets, steaks and shellfish are exceptional when broiled. First, arrange fish on a well-greased broiler rack. Then, for a distinctive Oriental flavor, baste with a ginger teriyaki marinade before, during and after broiling. Or, for a delicate balance of lemon and herbs, try a lemon herb seafood marinade. Keep fish about 4" from the heat and follow the "10 minute rule." However, since broiler temperature can vary, check your fish frequently for doneness.

**Grilling**

Everything tastes terrific off an open grill, especially seafood. Many varieties of fish and shellfish can be grilled. Firm-fleshed fish such as salmon and tuna can be placed directly on a well-greased grill rack. For more delicate species, use a seafood grill screen or wrap the fish in aluminum foil and punch several holes. Always use a medium-hot fire. Place fish or shellfish about 4" from the coals. Then, try basting with a cajun style marinade for the spicy taste of New Orleans. Follow the "10 minute rule" and turn the fish just once.

**Poach**

Fill large skillet with 2"-3" of water. Season with salt, onion, lemon, bay leaf and peppercorns. Bring to boil. Add fillet or steak and cover tightly with lid. Reduce heat and simmer until done.

**Steaming**

When steaming, use a steam cooker or a deep pot with a tight cover. The pot should be deep enough to hold a wire basket or rack that keeps the fish 1"-2" above the water. Bring water to a boil and place fish on the rack. Cover pot tightly and reduce heat to finish cooking. Steaming perfectly cooks seafood while holding in all its natural nutrients. Add your favorite seafood seasoning for flavor.