

Chapter 36

Fish and Shellfish

Don't Fall for Fish Fraud

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

When buying fish, you want to be sure it's wholesome and of good quality. You also want to make sure you are receiving your money's worth.

What's in a Name?

Sometimes fish is mislabeled. This may be due to misunderstanding. For example, red snapper is a relatively expensive fish found in the southern Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Rockfish, which is far less costly, is commonly called Pacific red snapper in California. Retailers in other areas of the country who aren't familiar with this fact may honestly believe they're selling red snapper when it's actually rockfish.

Mislabeling may also be deliberate. An unethical wholesaler or retailer may try to pass off an inexpensive fish as a fish that sells for three to six times the price. Farm-raised fish, such as salmon, may be fed color additives to make the fish resemble that of more expensive fish varieties.

To cut down on mislabeling, intentional and otherwise, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has listed acceptable market names for over 1,000 different kinds of fish. You can protect yourself by learning recognizable signs of fish fraud such as those described here.

- ◆ **Orange roughy** This fish comes only from New Zealand and Australia. In the United States, it always arrives frozen. If sold thawed, it must be labeled "previously frozen" or "fresh thawed."
- ◆ **Shark fillets** These usually have a dark streak in the center and rough skin around the edge. Swordfish, which looks similar but usually costs more, does not bear these trademarks.
- ◆ **Scrod** The term scrod describes a fish—haddock, pollock, or cod—that weighs less than 2½ pounds. The term originally was known as the catch of the day in Boston-area restaurants and fish markets.



- ◆ **Haddock** Haddock is marked by a lateral line, a dark stripe running lengthwise near the skin surface.
- ◆ **Skinless cod fillets** These have a strip of white fat along the lateral line and a tissue-fine membrane along the belly side.

Other Fishy Deals

Mistaken identity is just one potential seafood-sale fraud. The weight of seafood is another. Processors are allowed to soak scallops and oysters to keep them from drying out. With excessive soaking, however, they become heavier. When they are sold by weight, consumers pay for the added water. Likewise, processors may thinly glaze shrimp and lobster tails with ice to protect them from freezer burn. The weight of the glaze, however, must not count in the weight of the fish. The FDA has also ruled that commercially prepared breaded shrimp must be more shrimp than breading.

How can you guard against fish-market fraud? You can start by buying only from reputable sellers. Beware of the bargain-priced "fresh" fish, especially if it's seasonal. It may be the previously frozen leftover of last season. If a fish doesn't look or taste as you expect, talk to the retailer. Maybe you were mistaken—or maybe you were taken.

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Thinking Critically

1. Why is fresh fish usually less expensive to purchase in the coastal regions than the Midwest region of the United States?

2. What aspects of technology now make fish available year around in all regions of the United States?

3. What is the impact of fish farming on the American diet? Is this a benefit? Explain your answer.

4. What can you do to avoid fish and seafood fraud?

For Further Study

- ◆ Fish are rich in two forms of omega-3 fatty acids. Research the role of omega-3 fatty acids in the human diet. Suggest a dietary plan that would better meet people's requirements for omega-3 fats.
- ◆ Investigate the role of government in fish-market management. Write a summary about the advantages and disadvantages of government intervention and submit your summary to your teacher.
- ◆ Plan a lunch menu and a dinner menu using tuna. What preparation techniques would be the same or different? Share your menus with the class.
- ◆ What are your favorite kinds of fish? How do you prefer to have your fish prepared? Create a file of recipes for your favorite kinds of fish. Submit your file to your teacher for review. Share your favorite recipes with others that you know.