



# Seafood Vocabulary

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## **Ahi**

The Hawaiian name for tuna.

## **Aquaculture**

The farming of aquatic species, such as fish and shellfish, in salt, brackish, or freshwater. About half of the seafood produced globally is from aquaculture operators.

## **Belly Burn**

A condition where the bones of the belly wall separate from the flesh and a sign of poor handling. Left too long before gutting, digestive enzymes break down flesh adjacent to the intestines.

## **Billfish**

Pelagic fish whose upper jaws are prolonged into a spear or sword, e.g. swordfish.

## **Biomass**

This is the total weight of a number of organisms or population of a species.

## **Bleeding**

Process in which fish are bled while alive by severing an artery. The highest quality fish are bled.

## **Block Frozen**

Seafood that has been frozen in a plate freezer under hydraulic pressure. Fillet blocks, which are normally 16.5 pounds, are sawed into pieces and used to make a variety of breaded and battered products such as fish sticks. Raw, shell-on shrimp are often frozen in 2-kilo or 5-pound blocks, as is crabmeat.

## **Boneless**

A fillet or portion that has all the bones removed.

## **Brine Freezing**

The practice of freezing seafood by immersion in liquid brine, usually at temperatures of about 5°F. King, snow and Dungeness crab are usually brine frozen.

## **Bullet**

A term used to describe a finfish that has had its head, guts, and tail removed. Most often used with mahi-mahi or farmed sturgeon.



## **Burned**

(Or "Burnt") A metabolic change to the flesh of a fish, most associated with tuna. When tuna are caught by troll or handline, they can struggle during capture. Since tuna are warm-blooded, they can literally cook or burn their flesh due to metabolic changes. Burned tuna will have a lighter color, a softer texture, and a reduced shelf life.

## **Bushel**

A unit of measure equal to 32 quarts or 8 gallons. Most often used when selling live mollusks like clams, oysters, and mussels.

## **By-catch**

Fish and other marine life that are incidentally caught while fishing for the target species. Bycatch is generally discarded dead while at sea and can include seabirds, turtles, marine mammals, juveniles of the target species, or targeted fish from other fisheries. Reduction of bycatch is an ongoing effort in many fisheries and is a common criterion in wild seafood sustainability ratings and criteria in assessing the overall sustainability evaluation.

## **Castnet**

Nets usually cast from shore or a boat that catch fish by falling on top of them and then closing, typically restricted to shallow waters.

## **Catch**

The total number of fish and marine life taken by fishers from an area or a given period of time, including bycatch.

## **Caviar**

Legally, in the U.S. only salted sturgeon eggs can be labeled simply caviar. Eggs or roe from other species must be labeled to include the species of fish, i.e. salmon caviar, paddlefish roe.

## **Cello Pack**

Packages or block-shaped wraps of frozen fillets (traditionally from North Atlantic groundfish species like cod and haddock) wrapped in plastic cellophane or polyethylene film, typically packed six packages to a 5-pound box. Each package is graded by the number of fillets per wrap, i.e. 1/3 cellos contain 1 to 3 fillets per wrap.

## **Ciguatera**

A type of potentially fatal poisoning associated with reef fish that ingest the ciguatoxin. It is not a function of poor handling.

## **CO-Treated**

Fish fillets that have been exposed to carbon monoxide, which is used to retain or enhance red color.

## **Copepods**

A large group of small crustaceans and an important food source for larger species such as fish, seabirds, and baleen whales.



## **Crayfish**

In the U.S., the name associated with small, lobster-like crustaceans, which are also known as crawfish. Overseas, the name is sometimes used to describe spiny, or rock lobsters.

## **Crustacean**

Invertebrates characterized by a segmented body (with limbs that are paired and jointed) and exoskeleton; e.g. lobsters, crabs, and shrimp.

## **Cryogenic**

The extremely cold freezing process, usually using liquid nitrogen or carbon dioxide. Because of its higher cost, most often used to freeze higher-value seafood like shrimp and lobster.

## **Demersal**

Refers to fish living close to the bottom of a body of water, such as cod or flounder. Synonymous with “groundfish” or “bottomfish.”

## **Dragger**

A term for a trawler, a boat that tows a large net behind it.

## **Dredge**

A heavy mesh gear that sucks up everything from the seafloor, used primarily to target shellfish. The impacts of dredge gear on benthos habitats is an environmental concern.

## **Dressed**

Fish that has been gutted and had the entrails removed.

## **Driftnet**

A large gillnet suspended vertically by floats that drift in the open ocean. Drift nets are banned in international waters due to the indiscriminate nature of catch and are limited to 1.5 miles in length in U.S. waters.

## **Dry**

A reference to a product that has not had had water added it to by using STP.

## **Effluent**

The waste stream and material from an aquaculture facility as a byproduct of the aquaculture operation usually consisting of fecal matter, nutrients and chemicals such as pesticides and antibiotics.

## **Estuary**

An ecosystem defined as the intersection of a freshwater river and a saltwater body (oceans) that serve as nurseries for juvenile fish and provide other ecosystem services.



## Factory Boat

A large fishing boat that processes and freezes its catch on board in a processing “factory.” The level of processing may vary from simply heading and gutting fish to producing skinless, boneless fillets.

## FAS

Abbreviation for frozen-at-sea.

## Feed Conversion Ratio (FCR)

In aquaculture, this term is generally the ratio of how much food is used to produce the fish species, or more specifically the ratio of the amount of feed necessary to the gain in wet body weight of fish produced. The lower the ratio the better the situation as wild seafood protein is often fed to grow farmed fish, resulting in a net loss of fish.

## Fillet

A strip of flesh from the side of a fish, cut away from the backbone. Fillets can be skin-on or skinless, bone-in or boneless. If the bones are removed by cutting out a strip of flesh, the fillet is “v-cut.” If the nape and bones are removed, it is a “j-cut.”

## Finning

The process of removing sharks' fins and discarding the rest of the body, primarily used for soups in Asian markets and a practice banned in the United States in 2000.

## Fishmeal

Fish or shellfish that is manipulated by drying, cooking, pressing and/or grinding fish or shellfish as a protein source used primarily in aquaculture operations for carnivorous fish.

## Fishery

The taking or removal of one or more species of fish from an aquatic environment using a type of fishing technology (gear) by one or more fishers, with the primary focus being on the human aspects of fishing and the resulting activities involved.

## Fishery Management Council

Eight regional councils in the U.S. responsible for developing Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for fisheries that occur in federal waters.

## FOB

Free on board; a location usually follows, indicating the point at which any additional shipping charges are the buyer's responsibility (i.e., FOB Dutch Harbor).

## Freezer Burn

Dry, white crumbly spots on frozen seafood caused by dehydration. A sign that either the fish has been in the freezer a long time, or was not properly protected prior to freezing.



## **G&G**

Head-on finfish that has been gilled and gutted. Typically done with higher-value species like red snapper, grouper and king salmon.

## **Gaping**

Separation of fish flesh, usually a sign of soft flesh and an indicator of poor handling.

## **Gillnet**

A net where the fishes head passes through the mesh opening but the fish is caught by its gills and cannot escape. Many states have banned their use in coastal waters due to bycatch, but regulations on mesh size, net location, and timing of when nets are in the water are increasingly common to reduce bycatch.

## **Glaze**

A protective coating of ice on frozen seafood to protect it from dehydration and oxidation during cold storage. Drained weight is a measure of frozen seafood after the glaze has been removed.

## **Grading**

Size measurements by which seafood is often sold. Increments are most often either counts per pound (i.e., 21/25 shrimp) or by graded weights (i.e., 4-6 lb. H&G salmon or 2/4 oz. pollock fillets).

## **Green**

A term used to describe raw, frozen shellfish, i.e., green, headless shrimp. Can also be used to describe the weight of seafood before it is processed, i.e., green weight.

## **Groundfish**

A generic term to describe the different types of finfish that live on or near the seafloor such as cod, flounder, and rockfish.

## **H&G**

A term used to describe fish that have had the heads and guts removed.

## **Handline**

A fishing line principally managed by hand as opposed to the use of a rod to manage the line.

## **High-Grading**

The fishing practice of retaining the most valuable target species being harvested and discarding the lesser valuable target species, often due to the species characteristics such as size and color.

## **High Seas**

The designation is given to the area of the ocean that is not governed by any single country and where much fishing takes place.



## **Histamines**

Chemicals produced by the decomposition of flesh in scombroid species (e.g. tuna, mahi-mahi, mackerels) when fish are not adequately refrigerated. Rarely fatal, but can cause severe illness.

## **Hook-and-Line**

A fishing method that uses natural or artificial bait placed on a hook fixed to the end of a line in both single and multiple units; often confused with longlines.

## **IQF**

Individually Quick Frozen. Seafood that is IQF is normally protected with a glaze to prevent dehydration.

## **ITQ/IVQ**

Individual Transferable Quota/Individual Vessel Quota. These are quotas that give fishermen ownership to harvest a specified amount of fish or shellfish. In most cases, they can be bought, sold or leased.

## **IUU Fishing**

An abbreviation for "Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated" as it pertains to fishing that is conducted accordingly. Often referred to as 'pirate' fishing, IUU fishing is a major threat to the sustainability of seafood as there is very little way to account for how much seafood is being taken from the overall system and undermines the integrity of management and legitimate fishers to harvest seafood responsibly.

## **J-Cut**

A method of trimming a fillet that removes both the nape and bones. J-cuts are the most expensive cut because the yield is lower. In the case of H&G fish, a j-cut means the nape is removed.

## **Jig**

A method of fishing that uses actively fished vertical lines onto which baited hooks are attached.

## **Landings**

The quantity of fish/shellfish brought ashore for sale, not including possible bycatch caught and discarded at sea.

## **Layerpack**

A carton of fillets that are packed in layers with each layer being separated by a sheet of polyethylene.

## **Loin**

The thickest part of a fillet, above the belly cavity. Also used to describe boneless quarters from large fish like tuna and swordfish.

## **Longline**

A fishing method that uses several short lines with baited hooks attached to the main line that is dragged through the water. Longlines can contain thousands of hooks and extend for several miles and often result in high levels of bycatch depending on the number of hooks, when the lines are in the water, and where they are being fished.



## **Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)**

The maximum amount of a species that can be removed from its environment without diminishing the long-term health of the overall population; a term that is often used by scientists and fishery managers when making recommendations or establishing fishing limits.

## **Merus**

Meat from the leg section of a crab nearest to the shoulder.

## **Nape**

The thinnest part of a fish, near the front, around the belly.

## **Ocean Run (O/R)**

A term for a pack of ungraded, random weight products.

## **Overcapitalization**

The scenario where there are more fishermen, vessels, and/or gear ('capacity') in a fishery than is necessary to catch the available volume of target species, and often leads to overfishing.

## **Overfishing**

The scenario where the amount of fish taken in a fishery is greater than the amount of the remaining fish population can reproduce to the same or greater level; a net loss in fish.

## **PBO/PBI**

Acronym for pinbones out / pinbones in.

## **Pelagic**

Fish that live above the sea floor, often near the surface. Many pelagic species such as mahi-mahi, tuna, and swordfish are also highly migratory.

## **Pinbones**

Fine bones which are often found along the midline of a fillet. Most often used when describing salmon or trout bones.

## **Plankton**

Small plant (phytoplankton) and animal (zooplankton) species that spend some or all of their lives near the sea surface. Many marine species are planktonic in their life stages (e.g. cod, Dungeness crab) and they are the basis of the marine food web providing food for such species as whale sharks and blue whales.

## **Pole**

A fishing method where fish are attracted to bait placed in the water and then hooked with a line on the end of a pole and 'poled' out of the water; used to capture surface swimming fish such as yellowfin and skipjack tuna.



## **Pond**

An aquaculture facility, either natural or man-made, with differing impacts on the environment based on how the discharge from the pond is handled. Many catfish, carp, and tilapia are produced in ponds.

## **Pot**

A.K.A. "trap," a cage or basket usually placed on the seafloor connected by ropes to floating buoys on the sea surface.

## **Purse Seine**

A net that encompasses a school of fish and then is drawn closed at the bottom in the form of a purse.

## **Raceway**

The term describes both the larger type of aquaculture system in which water is diverted from nearby streams or pumped from wells into concrete troughs where fish are held and then the water is usually treated and discharged and the troughs themselves, known as raceways.

## **Roe**

Eggs from a fish or shellfish.

## **Rigor Mortis**

Temporary stiffening of muscles following death. Fish should be processed either pre- or post-rigor, as handling during rigor can cause gaping of the flesh.

## **Sashimi**

Thinly sliced pieces of fish or shellfish that are eaten raw. Also used (both accurately and inaccurately) to indicate a fish of premium or "sashimi" quality.

## **Section**

A cooked crab portion that contains one half of a cleaned crab, including legs, claw, and shoulder.

## **Shatterpack**

A carton of frozen fillets similar to a layerpack, but layers are separated by a continuous interleaved polyethylene sheet. Individual fillets can be separated by dropping or "shattering" the carton.

## **Soaked**

A product that has had water added to it by using STP.

## **Stock**

A distinct sub-population of a larger group of species that is reproductively isolated to some extent from other populations; in fishery management, the term can be used to describe one or more subpopulations of one or more species.





## **STP**

Acronym for sodium tripolyphosphate, a widely used food additive. Although it is designed to prevent drip loss, in practice STP is used by processors to increase yields by adding water to a seafood product. In some cases, such as scallops, STP can allow a processor to gain 10 or 15 percent additional weight.

## **Steak**

In smaller fish such as salmon and halibut, a cross-section of a fish, containing the backbone. In larger fish such as tuna and swordfish, steaks are boneless portions cut from a loin.

## **Styro**

Short for a brand name (Styrofoam®) of a box that is made from extruded polystyrene foam. Widely used to ship higher value fresh seafood such as farmed salmon and live shellfish.

## **Surimi**

Raw extruded flesh from lower-value finfish like pollock and hake that is frozen in blocks and later used to make seafood analogs.

## **Tail**

The thin, tapered portion of a fillet that normally does not contain bones.

## **Tasteless Smoke**

A patented process that uses scrubbers to remove odor and taste components from a wood-generated smoke. Like treating with CO, it is used to retain red color in fish such as tuna at normal cold storage temperatures. Also used in fish like mahi-mahi, swordfish, and tilapia to turn brown bloodlines a more attractive reddish color.

## **Ton**

A common unit of measurement. A metric ton contains 2,205 pounds, while a short ton contains 2,000 pounds.

## **Total Allowable Catch (TAC)**

A fishery management term that defines the total amount of a target species that can be taken in a given time period, usually based on a fishing season or annual basis.

## **Tote**

A large container used to hold fish or shellfish. Fresh seafood is iced and held in plastic totes until processing. Fiber totes are used to ship loose frozen H&G fish such as salmon and halibut to avoid the added cost of boxing fish.

## **Trap**

A fishing method that uses a device, usually a cage or pot, that catch fish/shellfish within the device; typically baited with the cage designed for a specific species and often very little bycatch.



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## **Trawl**

A fishing method using a net with a wide mouth that tapers to a small end towed behind a fishing vessel at various depths of the sea including the bottom and mid-water levels. There are both habitat impact and bycatch concerns with trawl fishing because of the indiscriminate nature of the gear.

## **Trolling**

A type of hook-and-line fishing method where one line or multiple unconnected lines, each with baited hooks, are towed behind a fishing vessel.

## **V-Cut**

A cut that removes pinbones by making a V-shaped incision along both sides of the bone strip, leaving most of the nape.

## **Wetlock**

A wax impregnated, waterproof cardboard box that is widely used to ship fresh fish.