Fishery Basics — Seafood Markets

When Are Different Fish at the Market?

Due to the migratory patterns of some species, spawning seasons of others, management measures, and/or environmental conditions, specific fisheries operate only during certain times of the year. Thus fresh seafood is only available for purchase during the time of year the fishery operates. Below is a table highlighting the commercial fishing seasons for the 7 fisheries included in the California Fisheries section of this website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fishery</th>
<th>Open Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Sardines</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spot Prawns</td>
<td>August –April (North of Pt. Arguello)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February – October (South of Pt. Arguello)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sole</td>
<td>All year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albacore Tuna</td>
<td>All year, but catches usually occur from June-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinook Salmon</td>
<td>*2011 Season- May 1 – Oct. 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dungeness Crab</td>
<td>Nov. 15 – Jun. 30 (Central CA)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec. 1 – July 15 (Northern CA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Squid</td>
<td>All year, but usually April-November (Central CA) and October-March (Southern CA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The commercial salmon season varies each year due management measures that are designed to rebuild populations of the species.

The availability of specific fishery products in different regions of California also varies over the year. Therefore, the Institute for Fisheries Resources provides information about when fish are in season and where you can buy locally harvested fish in eight regions along California’s coast:

- Fort Bragg Area
- Humboldt Bay Area
- Los Angeles Area
- Monterey Bay Area
- Morro Bay Area
- North Bay Area
- San Diego Area
- San Francisco Area
- Santa Barbara Area

Advancements in aquaculture operations means that many fish products that were previously only available seasonally are now available year-round. In the United States, mollusks (e.g.,

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oysters, clams, and mussels) account for two-thirds of the marine aquaculture production. Salmon accounts for approximately 25% and shrimp account for approximately 10% of the remaining marine aquaculture production in the U.S.

**Flash freezing** is another process that ensures the availability of many species of seafood year-round. Flash freezing is the process in which a product is quickly frozen by subjecting it to temperatures well below the freezing point of water (0°C, 32°F). This technique prevents the development of large ice crystals within the tissues of the fish. If this process is completed soon after a fish is caught, the resulting product, when thawed properly, is **considered** to be as good as fresh fish.

**References**

California Department of Fish and Game. 2011 commercial fish business licenses [Internet]. Sacramento (CA): Department of Fish and Game; c2011 [cited 2011 May 19]. Available from: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/commfishbus/cfb_fees.html


Institute for fisheries resources [Internet]. San Francisco (CA): The Institute for Fisheries Resources; c2008 [cited 2011 May 19]. Available from: http://www.ifrfish.org/


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