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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release ON RECEIPT

"SALT SURPLUS FISH,"
SAY SERVICE EXPERTS

As a measure of economy in normal times, and as a safeguard against the encroaching possibility of rising food prices in an emergency, fishery technologists of the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, suggest to housewives--particularly those living near streams and lakes or the seashore--the preserving of surplus fish for future home consumption. Fish can be secured easily during their periods of abundance and held for use during the winter when, ordinarily, prices are high.

In addition to canning and smoking of fish (already discussed in this series of home economics releases), salting, or pickling, is another simple method of preserving which is available to the housewife. Where fresh fish are not obtainable, or in those seasons when they are relatively scarce almost everywhere, salt fish make a very acceptable and low-priced substitute. For the winter's supply, salt fish can be "laid in" in quantity and, therefore, have the merit of convenience and availability for emergencies.

Americans--notoriously deficient as fish eaters--are particularly neglectful of cured or preserved fishes, excepting those obtainable in tin. Less than 2 pounds per capita is the yearly consumption of salt and smoked fish, and of this the greater part is eaten by the foreign born.

It is not generally known that salt fishes (which are comparatively nonperishable) contain, pound for pound, more nutriment than when fresh. This is because the curing extracts a large part of the water, and what is left is more nearly all food. Of dry-salted cod, for instance, about 22 percent is protein, while that most valuable of foodstuffs constitutes but about 16 percent of the fresh fish. Mackerel contains about 22 percent when salted and 18 percent when fresh. At the same price per pound, salt cod is 37 percent, and salt mackerel 22 percent, cheaper than the same fish fresh--a point worthy of consideration for the home budget.

General methods of preparation and actual process of salting are these:

Large fish having soft fins, small scales, and thin skin should be scaled but not skinned. Remove the head, split down the belly to the vent, and remove the viscera. Make a cut on each side of the backbone inside of the body cavity, but the bone in two as far back as it can be reached, and remove the cut-off portion, then make a deep cut along one side of the backbone for the remainder of its length and remove the tail. If the fish are too large to go into the container, cut them to the proper length. The cheeks and the portion between the jaws, including the tongue, of many large fishes are excellent when boiled, and they may be preserved by removing the eyes and gills and packing the heads, after splitting them lengthwise, in the same container with the rest of the fish.

Slender fish, such as mackerel, whiting, large herring, etc., should be split down the back to one side of the backbone for the entire length, the belly walls not being cut. The backbone need not be removed. Smaller fish of the same

character need not be split but should be carefully eviscerated. Coarse-scaled, thick-skinned, spiny-finned fishes like black bass, perch, etc., should be skinned, and unless large and thick-meated need not be split.

Having dressed and thoroughly washed the fish in water containing a little salt, taking particular care to remove the blood near the backbone, cure them as follows:

Place a layer of coarse salt on the bottom of a tight keg, barrel, or other suitable vessel, and on this spread a layer of fish, one deep, sprinkle salt thickly over these, add another layer of fish, and repeat until the barrel is full of the supply of fish exhausted. The salt and the moisture from the fish will make a strong brine in which the fish should be left for a week or 10 days. At the end of that time remove the fish, thoroughly wash them, repack in the barrel, and cover with a freshly made brine strong enough to float a fresh egg. After a week this brine should be drawn off and the barrel filled with a saturated brine, that is, one in which a little undissolved salt will remain on the bottom of the vessel, after the solution has been subjected to prolonged stirring. Do not reuse the old brine. The barrel or keg should then be headed and stored in a cellar or the coolest place available. If there should be any leakage which may be discovered by the sound made when the barrel is struck with a stick at various heights, it should be made good by adding strong brine through a bunghole.

If the receptacle can not be filled at once, the fish may be preserved by placing on top of them a cover made of a barrel head or of pieces of wood cleated together to fit the container and weighting it with a clean stone or other heavy article which will not be affected by the salt. The success of the operation

will depend on using fresh fish, exercising care in the salting and the proper mixing of the brine, and on keeping the barrel tight and the fish covered with strong brine.

For use in southern States where considerable trouble has been experienced in the past in salting fish, fishery technologists--after extended research in the various factors affecting the salting of fish in warm climates--developed a method particularly adapted to such conditions. Salt fish of superior quality is prepared by this method which has been tested by repeated practical trials over a period of time. A complete description of the method, together with tested recipes, can be secured without charge by writing to the Publications Desk, Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., and requesting a copy of Memorandum S-332, "Method for Dry Salting Fish in Southern States."