

Ono

wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*)



Wahoo is commonly known as **ono** in Hawaii. *Ono* may grow to more than 100 pounds in round weight, but the usual size of the fish caught in Hawaii is 8 to 30 pounds.

Seasonality & How They Are Caught

Availability and Seasonality:

The supply (and price) of fresh *ono* is as limited and erratic as that of locally-caught mahimahi. Not an especially abundant fish, *ono* is most available in Hawaii during the summer and fall (May-October).

Fishing Methods:

Trollers catch about 58% of the commercial *ono* landed in Hawaii. The most of the rest are caught on longline gear. Among sport fishermen, *ono* is popular as a light-tackle gamefish. *Ono* rarely school, but groups may be found around fish ag-

gregation buoys.

Surface catches indicate that *ono* associate with banks, pinnacles and flotsam. However, longline catches suggest that this species is also widely distributed in the open ocean.

Distribution:

Troll-caught *ono* is marketed through the Honolulu fish auction, through intermediary buyers on all major islands, and directly to restaurants. The longline catch is sold primarily through the Honolulu auction.

Quality

The shelf life of fresh *ono* is relatively short -- 10 days when properly cared for. *Ono* keeps longer if stored dressed (especially if hung head down) and not filleted until shortly before use.

The first external evidence of deterioration in a whole *ono* is discoloration of the skin around the head and gill plates and a general softening of the flesh.

In a dressed fish, discoloration of the flesh exposed around the collarbone would indicate a loss of quality. Poor quality fillets have opaque, milky flesh or they may be gaping.

Product Forms and Yields:

Local fishermen market their *ono* as fresh, whole fish. Most is purchased by up-scale restaurants in Hawaii and on the mainland. Some restaurants buy fillets from intermediary suppliers, but others prefer to receive the fish headed and gutted to retain better quality. About 60 to 65% of whole fish weight can be recovered as fillet.

Color, Taste, Texture:

Ono flesh is whiter, flakier, and has a

more delicate texture than the meat of other fast-swimming, pelagic species. Although *ono* may make oceanic migrations as far as those of tuna and marlin, it contains less of the strong-tasting “blood meat” muscle that the latter species use for long-distance swimming.

Preparations

Although *ono* is versatile in its uses, cooking methods suitable for “lean” fish (those with low fat content) are

recommended so that the flesh does not dry out when cooked. One way to retain moisture in a lean fish is to poach.

Historical Note

Ono is a Hawaiian word meaning “good to eat.” The *ono* was said by the ancient Hawaiians to be the parent of the *opelu*, a mackerel scad of great importance to the subsistence of the early Hawaiians.

The European explorers who first mapped the Hawaiian Islands found *ono* to be plentiful off the island of Oahu. Maps of the time indicate that a very common spelling of the word “Oahu” was “Wahoo,” and this is believed to be the origin of the fish’s other name.



Hawaii Seafood Council

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