

Mahimahi

mahimahi (Coryphaena hippurus)



Mahimahi is the Hawaiian name that has become the common market name for this fish. It is also known as dorado or dolphin (the fish, not the mammal) in other parts of the country. When a *mahimahi* takes the hook, its colors are brilliant blue and silver dappled with yellow. These fade quickly when the fish dies.

Seasonality & How They Are Caught

Availability and Seasonality:

Locally-caught *mahimahi* is available most of the year, with peak catches usually March to May and from September to November. Most of the fish are between 8 and 25 pounds, but larger fish are caught by trollers.

Fishing Methods:

Longline vessels harvest about 60%

of Hawaii's commercial landings of *mahimahi*. Trollers catch nearly 40% of the landings. Schools of *mahimahi* are common around flotsam drifting at sea and near fish aggregation buoys.

Although *mahimahi* have been raised successfully in tanks from eggs to adults, the high cost has made commercial aquaculture unfeasible to date.

Distribution:

The popularity of fresh *mahimahi* in the tourist industry and with residents has created a steady demand for this fish and consistently good prices. Troll-caught *mahimahi* 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 fish auction.

Quality

Fresh *mahimahi* has a shelf life of 10 days if properly cared for. The fish caught by trolling are only one or two days on ice when landed and are typically fresher than the *mahimahi* caught by longline boats on extended trips.

The first external evidence of deterioration in a whole *mahimahi* is softening and fading of bright skin colors. In a dressed fish, discoloration of the flesh exposed around the collar bone would indicate a loss of quality. *Mahimahi* retains better quality if it is not filleted until shortly before use.

Product Forms and Yields:

Local Hawaii *mahimahi* is marketed as fresh, gilled & gutted fish and fillets. Most are purchased by upscale restaurants in Hawaii and on

the mainland.

The preferred market size of *mahimahi* is over 15 pounds in body weight. The average yield of fillet from whole fish ranges from 40-45%. Better yield can be recovered from large fish and from females than from males (with larger heads). The quality of fresh Hawaii *mahimahi* is distinct from imported fresh and especially frozen *mahimahi*.

The bulk of the fast-food and general public restaurants in Hawaii and the mainland market cannot afford to put high-priced, fresh *mahimahi* from Hawaii on their menus.

Instead, large imports of frozen and fresh *mahimahi* fillets from Taiwan and Latin America have made low-budget *mahimahi* dinners feasible for such establishments. The fresh and frozen products each have separate niches, with little overlap.

Color, Taste, Texture:

Mahimahi is thin-skinned with firm, light pink flesh. It has a delicate flavor that is almost sweet. When *mahimahi* is cooked, it turns white.

Preparations:

Mahimahi is ideal for a variety of

preparations. However, care should be taken not to overcook *mahimahi*. It should be cooked until it flakes and no longer.

Historical Note

No fish is better known in the upscale restaurant market than Hawaii's fresh *mahimahi*. Among Hawaii's visitors, *mahimahi* has assumed the position of the State's best known fish



Hawaii Seafood Council

Acknowledgement: produced with support from PacMar, Inc., and NOAA (Award No. NAO6NMF4520222) hawaii-seafood.org

