

A Consumer's Guide for Wisconsin Farm-Raised Fish



Developed and compiled by:

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**UW Stevens Point – Northern Aquaculture Demonstration
Facility**

UW-Extension Aquaculture Outreach

And the

**Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and
Consumer Protection**

**Something Special
from
Wisconsin**

Why Wisconsin Fish?

- “Fish Miles”
- Economic Benefits
- Environmental Sustainability
- Social Benefits
- Regulatory Standards
- Where can I find Wisconsin-raised fish?

“Aquaculture provides half of the world’s seafood, with about 50 million tons grown worldwide in 2006. Further half the seafood consumed in the United States comes from aquaculture, and yet about 85 percent of that amount is imported.”⁽¹⁾

Benefits of Local Fish - Why Wisconsin Fish?

What is local? This question does not often have a specific answer; however consumers often use the product's locality relative to other similar products as part of the buying decision. Often "local" is an idea rather than a location. Local may mean different things to different people. As we discuss the benefits of purchasing local fish, think about dropping a pebble into your favorite, local fish pond. The biggest splash is often at the center; followed by ripples that grow weaker the further they move out from the center. In the same way, your purchases may have the greatest impact in your immediate community, followed by impacts in your county, state, region and country.

Why buy local? There are probably as many reasons to buy locally as there are definitions of local. Below, we have listed a number of things to consider about buying local fish. Perhaps the greatest benefit of buying local is that you may have the opportunity to speak with the farmer and gain an understanding of how the fish are raised.

A. "Fish miles"

Local food advocates use the term "food miles" to describe the distance a food item travels from the farm to your home. Fish miles may then refer to the miles the fish need to travel whether they are used for food, stocking or bait. Buying local reduces the number of miles your fish have to travel and may help:

- Reduce the transportation stress on live fish.
- Reduce the time the fish are being transported.
- Reduce the amount of energy (fossil fuels) being used to transport the fish.
- Reduce the potential length of time to get the fish from the farm to market – increasing the potential quality and "freshness."

B. Economic Benefits

If you look at the global picture,

"Aquaculture provides half of the world's seafood, with about 50 million tons grown worldwide in 2006. Further half the seafood consumed in the United States comes from aquaculture, and yet about 85 percent of that amount is imported."⁽¹⁾

"In 2009, Americans consumed an average of about 16 pounds of seafood per person, but less than 1.5 pounds of that was from domestic aquaculture."⁽¹⁾

This suggests that 80 to 90 cents of every dollar of fish purchased currently leaves the U.S. So what's the economic benefit to buying local fish?

- Buying local keeps your dollars circulating in your community.
- Buying locally-grown fish decreases our dependence on seafood coming in from overseas.
- Supporting local farm businesses helps improve farm incomes and creates jobs in the U.S.

Benefits of Local Fish - Why Wisconsin Fish?

C. Environmental sustainability

Aquaculture is a water dependent industry and fish farmers know that without good water quality they are unable to raise any fish. Water and land are precious resources and fish farms are part of the larger mosaic of farmland and wild lands found in the State. A thoughtful approach to aquaculture and well-managed farms can aid the environment through:

- Providing wetland environments in the midst of dry land. Creating a mosaic of ecosystems.
- Production of farm-raised minnows can reduce our dependency on natural minnow populations.
- Production of farm-raised minnows and game fish can supply game fish or forage fish to supplement wild fish populations.
- Production of the mostly native or naturalized species available in Wisconsin reduces the risk of introducing or spreading invasive species into waters of Wisconsin.

D. Social Benefits

Does your support of local fish-farms matter? Wisconsin fish farmers are a part of the larger fabric of Wisconsin agriculture and they are your neighbors. When you buy Wisconsin farm-raised fish you help build the connections between fish farmers and you, their local customers. Buying local fish can help:

- Support local families, family farms, bait shops and other local businesses that depend on Wisconsin aquaculture.
- Make an investment in continuation of farms and the preservation of open spaces – marketing locally can sometimes provide the fish farm a better return, allowing the farmer to resist development pressures.
- Support local communities. Farms contribute more in taxes than in services required.
- Support the provision of live bait for recreational fishing and tourism.
- Support our local food security.

E. Regulatory Standards

Buying locally may remove the anonymity of a farmer and farmers take their responsibility to consumers seriously. And in addition to that there are considerable regulatory standards in the United States.

The U.S. has some of the strictest environmental and product safety rules and regulations found anywhere, but more than 88% of all the seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported. Almost half of that total is farm-raised, often in countries that do not have stringent environmental and food safety regulations. (NAA)

- Regulations in the state require that fish are certified free of disease before they are stocked or used for bait.

Benefits of Local Fish - Why Wisconsin Fish?

F. Where can I find Wisconsin-raised Fish?

1. Sources for Food Fish

NADF/WAA Local Food Resources List:

https://campus.uwsp.edu/sites/cols-ap/nadf/Extension_Results/Local%20Food%20Resources.pdf

WAA:

<http://www.wisconsinaquaculture.com/>

Something Special from Wisconsin program:

<http://www.somethingspecialwi.com/>

Savor Wisconsin Website

<http://www.savorwisconsin.com>

2. Sources for Wisconsin farm-raised Bait Fish

WAA:

<http://www.wisconsinaquaculture.com/>

3. Sources for Wisconsin farm-raised stockers

WAA:

<http://www.wisconsinaquaculture.com/>

Resources

Wisconsin Aquaculture Association (WAA):

<http://www.wisconsinaquaculture.com/>

University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point – Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility (NADF):

<http://aquaculture.uwsp.edu>

National Aquaculture Association (NAA)

<http://www.thenaa.net/>

Superscript References

⁽¹⁾Agricultural Research Magazine. Jeff Silverstein. “Forum: Supporting U.S. Aquaculture.” October, 2010 Vol. 58, No.9. [Online] Available. (2010). <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/AR/archive/oct10/>