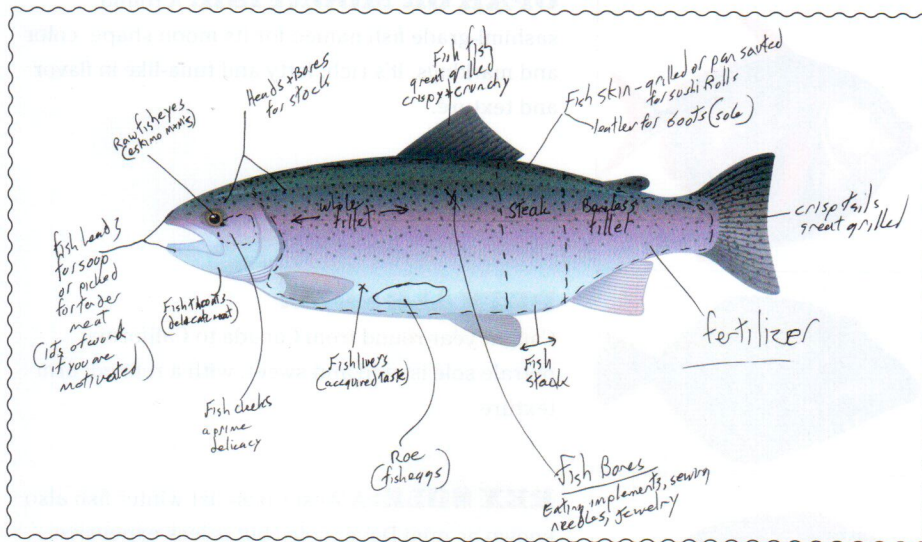


food facts & other tidbits

BEHIND THE FISH

Dirk Fucik of Dirk's Fish and Gourmet Shop in Chicago takes us behind the fish to point out all his favorite parts.



Asian invasion

Every mile of Illinois' river is home to 2,800 Asian carp—more than half the total fish in the state's river system. This invasive species threatens to alter the native Great Lakes fish ecosystem and the only way to control the population may be to eat them.



In China, the fish is highly sought after and the heads are used to make soup.

American diners may be hesitant to try a new fish, but Asian carp is high in protein and omega-3 fatty acids, low in contaminants and has a mild flavor. Chefs who value sustainability are turning this fish into tasty entrées, and at \$4 a pound, it's the cheapest fish protein around.

"I think carp has a bad reputation due to adverse media coverage," says Dirk Fucik of Dirk's Fish and Gourmet Shop in Chicago. "Once people taste it, I think they will like it."

Asian carp are extremely bony and hard to process, so Fucik grinds the fish for burgers. "The bone structure of the carp is just too intensive to remove in any other way," he says.

Chef Phillip Foss of El Ideas in Chicago agrees: "It's really difficult to work with," he says. "The only pro is that you're helping the environment." At his former Chicago restaurant, Lockwood, Foss served carp chowder, ceviche and "carp"-accio with watermelon and black garlic, but he doesn't plan on putting the fish on the menu at El Ideas. "Once all the bones are out, it actually becomes quite expensive because the yield is so poor." — Amber Gibson

Sea-to-Table

Fans of TV's satirical *Portlandia* will recognize the scene: a hipster couple out to dinner interrogates their server about

Courtesy of Taranta restaurant



the provenance of the chicken on tonight's menu, eventually going so far as to leave the restaurant, visit the farm and inspect the conditions before returning to place their order. The reality, of course, is that curiosity about our food and where it comes from is becoming ever more mainstream.

Trace and Trust, a company from New England, facilitates just that. Founders Dave Arnold, Bob Wescott and Christopher Brown were preoccupied with freshness and started distributing directly to chefs rather than wholesalers. The collective of fisherman, called Wild Rhody, provides chefs detailed information about their catch: when and where exactly the fish was caught and the name of the vessel and captain who caught it. Chefs in turn are starting to pass the details on to curious consumers. And they're getting creative about how they do it, too.

"I designed an edible code and transported that to a plate to give the consumers an opportunity to connect directly to the fisherman," said Chef Jose Duarte of Boston's Taranta restaurant, about the QR code he stamps on the plate of a fish appetizer in squid ink diluted in water. Guests scan it with their smartphones to read details online from Trace and Trust; Duarte tosses in the recipe as well. "My purpose," he explained, "is to create awareness. Sourcing is important and I want people to know that."

— Maisie Wilhelm