

## **Chef Tips for Cooking Fish**

Fish is not always the easiest to cook at home. With a few simple steps and patience, your at-home fish results can be just as delicious as going out. Buying, storing, and cooking fish isn't hard; it just requires some knowledge.

Here are some key chef-inspired tips for cooking fish:

Fresh fish smells sweet. Any fishy or strong flavors mean the fish is past its prime, so do not buy it. Whole fish should have bright eyes and firm flesh. Fish fillets or steaks should be firm and bright looking, with no brown spots or discoloration.

Since most of us do not have fresh fish available, the fish you buy will be sold frozen or previously frozen. Keep it frozen until you're ready to cook it. Be sure to cook it as soon as it's thawed. If you're lucky enough to get fresh fish, it should be stored in your refrigerator for only a day or two since it's very perishable.

Thaw frozen fish in the fridge overnight, in a resealable plastic bag submerged in hot water for 5 minutes, or place sealed frozen fish under cool running tap water for 30 minutes.

Take the fish out of the refrigerator 15-20 minutes before cooking to ensure the whole piece (including the center) cooks evenly.

Fatty fish, like salmon, is ideal for broiling, grilling, pan-searing, and roasting, while leaner fish work well with moist heat cooking methods like braising, steaming, or poaching. Lean fish can be cooked with dry heat if butter or oil is used in sauteing.

Marinating fish adds flavor and moisture to the flesh, but any marinating should be brief. If fish flesh sits in acidic ingredients for more than 30 minutes, the acid will denature the delicate protein, and you'll have mushy fish when it's cooked. Throw the marinade away after removing the fish.

Patting the fish dry with a paper towel helps achieve a crispier sear and prevents the fish from being mushy.

A little pre-salting helps magically improve the fish's texture and boost the natural sweet flavor. Choose light sauces, herbs, and spices to compliment the fish. A squeeze of citrus juice balances fishy flavors.

Ensure the pan or grill is hot before adding the fish for even cooking and a good sear.

Start with high heat for a good sear, then reduce the heat for even cooking throughout.

When you place the fish in the pan or on the grill, let it cook undisturbed for two to four minutes before you touch it. The fish will develop a nice crust and will release when it's ready to turn.

As a general rule, cook fish fillets for about 10 minutes per inch of thickness, flipping once halfway through. Check the fish at seven to eight minutes to ensure it won't overcook. As fish cooks, the flesh turns opaque from translucent. Perfectly cooked fish will give very slightly when you press it. Cooked fish has a flakiness to it. Fish is safely cooked when the internal temperature reaches 145°F with a food thermometer.

For best results, cook fish until it's almost done, then remove the pan from the oven, microwave, stovetop, or grill and let it stand for a few minutes to finish cooking. When

removed from the heat source, the pan will hold heat, continuing to cook the fish for several minutes. Overcooked fish becomes dry and tough, so monitor doneness and avoid leaving it on the heat for too long.

Consider adding aromatic herbs and veggies to the pan or grill while cooking fish for added flavor.

Don't let fish intimidate you! Try these methods next time you're looking for a good fish recipe. With practice, you'll find a seafood meal is among the quickest and easiest meal in your repertoire.