

# NATURAL HEALTH

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# best fishes

*A cook's guide to shopping for—and cooking with—eco-friendly seafood.*

**S**HRIMP AND GRITS, fresh marinated salmon, pan-fried catfish—these mouthwatering dishes are nutritious (loaded with protein, vitamins, minerals, and omega-3 fatty acids) and easy to make (check out the three recipes that follow), but require a little mindfulness in the preparation. Buy the wrong kind of fish and you could end up ingesting high levels of mercury or inadvertently contributing to the overfishing of certain seafood populations. To protect your health—and the health of the planet—we put together this simple shopping checklist.

**SHOP SMART** Choosing sustainably farmed or caught seafood ensures that it was harvested without using destructive methods (such as trawling and dredging, which destroy eco-systems, or gill netting, which kills endangered species such as sea turtles and marine mammals like dolphins) or raised using practices that pollute nearby bodies of water with parasites and chemicals. “For some species, farming is best, for others, wild is better,” says Dane Klinger, research associate at the Blue Ocean Institute in Norwich, N.Y., who recommends checking for country-of-origin labels (domestically raised or harvested seafood is usually best) and asking your fishmonger how it was caught. »

By JANICE HUANG

Photography by HECTOR SANCHEZ



**Shrimp with Grits & Asparagus**  
(recipe, page 38)





Catfish en Papillote

## Catfish en Papillote

Serves 4

*Catfish's mild flavor is complemented by scallions, peppers, and ginger—which also bump up the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties of the dish.*

- 1 pound U.S.-farmed catfish fillet
- 4 scallions, julienned into matchsticks
- ½ red bell pepper, julienned into matchsticks
- 1 2-inch piece of ginger, peeled and julienned
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- Cilantro for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 400° F. Slice catfish at an angle, top to bottom, into four pieces. Tear four rectangles of parchment paper, each approximately 13 x 15 inches. Fold each in half and unfold. Arrange on baking sheet. Place a piece of catfish to one side of the fold on each piece of parchment.

2. Divide scallions, bell pepper, ginger, and garlic equally over each of the four pieces of catfish. In a small bowl, combine soy sauce, vinegar, and oil. Pour evenly on catfish. Refold parchment rectangles to cover catfish and press edges closed to create pouches.

3. Bake on sheet for 6 to 10 minutes (depending on thickness of fish), just until opaque through thickest part. Garnish with cilantro.

**Per serving:** 184 calories, 10 g fat (2 g saturated), 5 g carbohydrates, 19 g protein, 1 g fiber, 500 mg sodium (22% Daily Value).

We researched how to buy the best quality versions of five common types of seafood and then created recipes for them.

### domestic shrimp

**ECO BENEFITS** Sustainable farming and harvesting preserve marine habitats.

**HEALTH BENEFITS** Low in fat; high in selenium, protein, omega-3s, and vitamins D and B12

**HOW IT'S CAUGHT** The harvesting of U.S. Northern and pink salmon employs devices that reduce

“bycatch”—unintentionally caught and discarded marine animals. Avoid buying imported shrimp: Some tropical shrimp fisheries have significant amounts of bycatch, and in places like Southeast Asia and Latin America, shrimp ponds destroy mangrove forests and pollute coastal areas. In the U.S., measures to reduce pollution have made farmed shrimp an increasingly popular and available option. **COOKING TIP** Shrimp's subtle, briny flavor stands up well to spicy marinades and sauces. (See Shrimp with Grits & Asparagus recipe, page 38.)





Spring Salad with Sardines & Olives

## Spring Salad with Sardines & Olives

Serves 4

*Sardines supply a serious dose of omega-3s, and just the right note of salty tang to this light spring salad. (The dish's relatively high fat content is nearly all heart-healthy unsaturated fat.)*

- 8 sardine fillets
- Salt and pepper
- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup sun-dried tomatoes, julienned
- 1 cup assorted whole pitted low-sodium olives
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- ½ pound baby spinach, arugula, and other salad greens
- ½ red onion, cut in thin slices

1. Season sardines with salt and pepper on both sides. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in skillet over high heat. Place sardines in pan, skin side down. Fry 2 to 3 minutes or until brown. Flip; fry on other side another 2 to 3 minutes. Remove sardines from pan and set aside; reduce heat to medium and put sun-dried tomatoes and olives in sardine oil in pan. Heat sun-dried tomatoes and olives, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes. Set aside.

2. Combine balsamic vinegar, lemon juice, and salt and pepper to taste. Add 4 tablespoons oil in a slow stream, whisking constantly, until emulsified. Toss desired amount of vinaigrette with greens and onion slices; divide onto four plates. Scatter warmed sun-dried tomatoes and olives on greens; lay two sardine fillets on each salad.

**Per serving:** 397 calories, 34 g fat (5 g saturated), 5 g carbohydrates, 12 g protein, 2.5 g fiber, 500 mg sodium (22% Daily Value).

## domestic catfish

**ECO BENEFITS** Low-impact; fed a mostly vegetarian diet

**HEALTH BENEFITS** High in potassium and vitamin B12

**HOW IT'S CAUGHT** U.S.-farmed catfish are raised in closed, inland ponds, which minimizes the risk of contaminating larger eco-systems. Their impact is further reduced by their mostly vegetarian diets. "Catfish require much less fishmeal and fish oil in their feed than other farmed fish," says Klinger of the Blue Ocean Institute, which researches and recommends "ocean-friendly" seafood.

**COOKING TIP** The most popular American commercial fish, catfish has a mild flavor that makes it versatile in the kitchen. It's most often served pan-fried. (See Catfish en Papillote recipe, page 34.)

## wild sardines

**ECO BENEFITS** Thriving species, low on the marine food chain

**HEALTH BENEFITS** High in omega-3 fatty acids, calcium, and niacin

**HOW IT'S CAUGHT** Sardine populations are now healthy, after suffering a dramatic decrease in the late 1940s. These little fish mature quickly and



# CHOOSE WISELY

*When dining out or craving something more than catfish, use this handy at-a-glance guide to sustainable seafood.*

**CHOOSE** Domestically farmed caviar from white sturgeon and paddlefish

**INSTEAD OF** Wild sturgeon  
**REASON** Wild sturgeon populations have been so overfished that the United Nations imposes controls on the international caviar trade. Despite its efforts, illegal catch and trade still occur.

**CHOOSE** Striped bass, Pacific halibut, and sablefish (black cod)

**INSTEAD OF** Chilean sea bass  
**REASONS** Not really bass at all, Patagonia and Antarctic toothfish populations are declining; fishing methods damage sea-floor habitats and kill endangered seabirds like the albatross; and the fish have been found to contain high levels of mercury.

**CHOOSE** Pacific cod, striped bass, and white sea bass

**INSTEAD OF** Atlantic cod  
**REASON** This once-plentiful species has been so overfished that its numbers are now a fraction of what they once were, inspiring jokes about renaming Cape Cod.

**CHOOSE** Rainbow trout and U.S.-farmed tilapia

**INSTEAD OF** Monkfish  
**REASONS** When dredges and trawls are used to catch bottom fish, the sea floor is damaged; when gill nets are used, sea turtles and marine mammals are sometimes caught and killed. High levels of mercury have been found in monkfish, yet they continue to be overfished.



Striped Bass

## Shrimp with Grits & Asparagus

Serves 4

*For a low-fat food, shrimp is surprisingly rich in flavor. Cooking it with asparagus ups the heart-health quotient because of asparagus's high levels of saponin, which helps flush fatty acids out of the body.*

- 1 pound U.S. shrimp with shells
- 4 cups water
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Salt and pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup grits [or other amount, 4 servings according to package instructions]
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 bunch asparagus, chopped into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Red pepper flakes
- Chopped chives for garnish

1. Peel shrimp and place shells in a medium saucepan. Pour water over shells; bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, devein shrimp. Toss peeled and deveined shrimp in a small bowl. Add lemon juice, salt, and pepper.

3. Once the pot with shells and water is done simmering, strain the water into a measuring cup or bowl and discard the shells. Put the water back into pot; bring back to boil and add grits; cook as directed.

4. In a sauté pan, heat olive oil over high heat. Add asparagus; sauté until tender, approximately 3 minutes. Add garlic; sauté until fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Add shrimp mixture; sauté until shrimp is just opaque, about 2 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes to taste. Serve over grits. Garnish with chives, if desired.

**Per serving:** 300 calories, 9 g fat (1 g saturated), 28 g carbohydrates, 27 g protein, 2 g fiber, 467 mg sodium (20% Daily Value).



reproduce often, which helps keep their numbers up. Because they are low on the marine food chain, sardines have very low levels of pollutants like mercury.

**COOKING TIP** Oil-rich sardines are brightened with the acidity of lemon juice. (See Spring Salad with Sardines & Olives recipe, page 36.)

## hand-harvested clams

**ECO BENEFITS** Hand-harvesting avoids dredging and preserves native eco-systems.

**HEALTH BENEFITS** Low in fat; high in iron, calcium, niacin, vitamin C

**HOW IT'S CAUGHT** Clams harvested with hand tongs or farmed in suspended bags, nets, or racks are better for the environment and the species. Farmed clams don't require

fish-based food (fishmeal and fish oil) as do most other aquaculture products. Avoid clams that have been harvested by dredging. "Dredging causes significant damage to the sea floor, underwater habitats, and other organisms," explains Klinger.

**COOKING TIP** Hard clams are popular in soups and with pasta, or simply steamed. (See Creamy Tomato Clam Soup recipe at [naturalhealthmag.com/clamsoup](http://naturalhealthmag.com/clamsoup).)

## wild alaskan salmon

**ECO BENEFITS** Avoids the pitfalls of farmed salmon, including sea lice, disease resistance, and the introduction of antibiotics into the eco-system

**HEALTH BENEFITS** One of the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids

**HOW IT'S CAUGHT** Wild Alaskan salmon is far preferable to farmed salmon, which often contains high levels of mercury and PCBs and transfers sea lice and parasites when the fish escape the farm and mingle with wild salmon. Alaska's wild salmon stocks are thriving (unlike those in the overfished Pacific Northwest). Look for wild Coho, Sockeye, Chinook, Chum, and Pink salmon. Unfortunately, most salmon (such as Atlantic) served in markets and restaurants is farmed.

**COOKING TIP** Drizzle salmon with extra-virgin olive oil, wrap it in foil or parchment, and bake it till it reaches the consistency you like best. (See Miso-Marinated Salmon recipe at [naturalhealthmag.com/misosalmon](http://naturalhealthmag.com/misosalmon).)



**LEARN MORE:** There are many watchdog groups devoted to protecting overfished populations. To find out more about them, go to [naturalhealthmag.com/sustainableseafoodresources](http://naturalhealthmag.com/sustainableseafoodresources).