



SEAFOOD 101

ALBACORE TUNA

THE BASICS

Market Name

Pacific albacore, Tombo, Tombo ahi (given to large red-meated albacore from Hawaii and the South Pacific). When used for sushi or sashimi, albacore is commonly sold as shiro maguro.

Harvest Method:

Local Ocean purchases only troll-caught albacore. Trollers fish near the surface of the ocean using a “hook and line” technique, dragging (or trolling) barbless hooks behind each fishing vessel. This method replaces traditional, non-discretionary, dolphin-harming netting practices and helps reduce the number of non-targeted species being caught. Troll gear has negligible habitat effects and almost no bycatch.

Season:

There is no set season for tuna. Tuna typically show up off the Oregon Coast in late June and stay until early to late September.

Stock Status:

There is some uncertainty associated with the status of the North Pacific stock, as biomass trends are increasing but fishing mortality on this stock may be too high; the stock status of North Pacific albacore is thus a moderate conservation concern. However, as the species is not long-lived, is highly reproductive, and has a broad range, albacore is considered inherently resilient to fishing pressure.

Home Range:

There are four stocks of albacore worldwide – the North and South Atlantic and the North and South Pacific. Each has its own migratory patterns, covering as much as 100 miles in a day and 5,300 miles in a season. Every year, the North Pacific albacore school sprints across the Pacific from Japan, arriving along the Oregon coast.

Management:

Tuna is managed as an open-access fishery, one of the last open-access fisheries in the United States. Open access is the condition where access to the fishery is unrestricted; i.e., the right to catch fish is free and open to all. Many open-access fisheries are in the process of being changed to individual quota or permitted, limited-entry fisheries.

VITALS

Flavor Profile

Tuna has a very strong fish flavor due in part to the high oil content of the flesh.

Preparation

Albacore is excellent grilled, but it can dry out quickly, so it is important to avoid overcooking. It is also well suited for marinades, like teriyaki.

Local Ocean prepares our grilled tuna medium rare for best results. Well-done tuna is tough and can give off bad odors due to the volatility of the natural oils.

Storage and Handling

Never expose loins to direct contact with ice or water, as meat will become discolored. The color will begin to fade to brown after prolonged exposure to air; therefore loins should be wrapped in plastic wrap to slow oxidation. Frozen loins will keep 6 months to a year.

Sashimi Grade

The USDA definition of sashimi grade is that the fish was frozen at sufficient temperature and time to kill any parasites. Thus the fish is safe for raw consumption. Local Ocean blast-frozen tuna is sashimi grade.



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MORE

Sustainability

Monterrey Bay Aquarium (MBA)
Green Light
Marine Stewardship Council

CANNING

Why does Local Ocean canned tuna taste so much better than Starkist, Bumble Bee, Chicken of the Sea or Costco tuna?

The major canneries cook their tuna once before it is canned and then again during the canning process. This process can reduce the flavor and nutritional value of the tuna and often requires water or oil to be added to keep the tuna moist.

The only time Local Ocean tuna is cooked is once during the actual canning procedure. This facilitates the preservation of the tuna's nutritional oils and natural flavor throughout the canning process and consequently we do not need to add any water or oil to keep the fish moist in the can.

The oil in Local Ocean canned tuna is pure fish oil. It should be retained as much as possible, as it is the healthiest part of the fish. We do add a pinch of salt to our cans to enhance the natural flavor.

FREQUENTLY GIVEN ANSWERS

Is it fresh or frozen?

Frozen fish has a bad name because of the old school practice of slowly freezing fish that did not sell fresh. That is NOT what we do. Local Ocean buys blast frozen-at-sea fish to hold during the off-season and “refreshes” it daily for our market and restaurant.

What is blast-freezing?

Blast-freezing is an accelerated process in which fish are frozen immediately after they're harvested. It uses ultra-low temperatures, often -40 degrees F, to freeze fish solid. In fact, flash-freezing allows fish to be caught, processed, and frozen solid in a matter of hours, not days. By minimizing the timeframe between harvest and production, flash-freezing “captures” the fish at its peak of perfection.

Why is flash-freezing better?

Flash-freezing maintains the “look and feel” of fish, without the use of artificial preservatives. It also helps fish resist freezer burn, for a much longer shelf life. Flash-freezing locks in the nutrition, texture, and flavor.

What's all this talk about mercury?

There has been recent concern regarding the dangers of high mercury levels in certain species of fish, particularly large tunas. Oregon troll caught albacore are generally smaller, younger fish (about 20 lbs. each) and as such have far lower levels of mercury than larger more mature fish caught further in the South Pacific (often 60 lbs. each or more).

The FDA limit for human consumption of mercury is 1 part per million (ppm). Oregon troll-caught albacore average total mercury content of 0.1 to .15 ppm, about 7 to 10 times lower than the national standard. Interestingly, current research is finding a link between mercury and selenium, wherein the high content of selenium in fish counteracts the negative effects of mercury.



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