



Golden Tilefish Fact Sheet

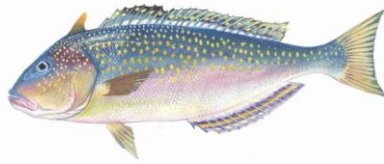


Image courtesy of Duane Raver

Basic Biology

Latin name: *Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps*

Range: Throughout the western Atlantic Ocean from Nova Scotia to southern Florida and in the eastern Gulf of Mexico

Habitat: Depths of 270-900 ft, usually over mud or sand bottom, occasionally over rough bottom

Diet: Primarily shrimp and crabs, secondarily fish, squid, molluscs and sea cucumbers

Age and growth: Maximum age of 40-50 years; average harvest size is 24 inches (maximum length is 50 inches); average harvest weight is about 10-25 lbs (maximum weight is 66 lbs)

Sustainability

- Golden tilefish are harvested with bottom longlines, hook-and-line and by spearfishing (shallower depths only). Longlines account for about 75% of the harvest.
- The South Atlantic population has been experiencing overfishing since the 1980s. The population has declined but is not considered overfished. Regulations implemented in 2007 were designed to stop overfishing and maintain the population size. These regulations have reduced the harvest by about 1/3, and the fishery is now operating sustainably.
- Regulations include an annual harvest quota and trip limits. When 75% of the annual quota is harvested, the trip limit decreases from 4,000 lbs to 300 lbs to prevent overharvest.
- Hook-and-line and spearfishing are very selective and have low levels of bycatch. In addition, bottom fishing is not permitted in protected deepwater coral areas such as the Oculina Bank.
- The Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic both have sustainable golden tilefish fisheries, whereas the Gulf of Mexico has few fishery management regulations and no stock assessment.

Info for Chefs

- Golden tilefish may become an important product in the southeast U.S. with increasing restrictions on the winter harvest of grouper.
- Be sure to ask your purveyor for information on the origin of golden tilefish, because it may be harvested in the Gulf of Mexico where the population is not managed for sustainability.

Info for Servers

- Golden tilefish is very similar to grouper, a moist, mild, white fish.
- Golden tilefish are included in an Advisory on Mercury in Seafood from the FDA instructing women and young children to not consume tilefish. The data on which the FDA base this warning show that Gulf of Mexico tilefish are high in mercury while Atlantic tilefish are low in mercury (levels are similar to snapper).

Sources: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. 2006. Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, Amendment 13C. www.safmc.net

Florida Fish Information, www.delawarechicken.com/SitePages/Seafoods/FishFacts.html

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. 2008. Public Hearing Draft, Effort Management in the Commercial Grouper and Tilefish Fisheries. July 2008. www.gulfcouncil.org

NOAA Fisheries. 2008 Status of U.S. Fisheries, Second Quarter Update, Status Determination Tables A-B. www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm

FDA. Mercury Levels in Commercial Fish and Shellfish. <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~frf/sea-mehq.html>