



# Lobster Fact Sheet

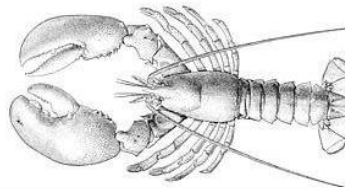


Image courtesy of NEFSC

## Basic Biology

Latin name: *Homarus americanus*

Range: Northwest Atlantic Ocean from Labrador to Cape Hatteras in coastal waters and out to depths of 2,300 feet; most abundant inshore from Maine to New Jersey

Habitat: Typically concentrated in rocky areas where shelter is readily available, although they are sometimes found in mud bottoms where they can burrow

Diet: Crabs, mollusks, worms, sea urchins, sea stars, fish, and macroalgae

Age and growth: Commonly grow to 8-24 inches carapace length (1-9 lbs) and are thought to live more than 50 years; the largest lobster on record weighed 44 lbs and measured over 3 feet

## Sustainability

- The U.S. lobster fishery is divided into three stocks. The largest population is in the Gulf of Maine, which supplies nearly 90% of U.S. harvest, with Southern New England and the Grand Banks each supplying relatively small amounts.
- The most recent stock assessment (2009) indicated that the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank lobster stocks are at healthy levels, though are under a great deal of fishing pressure. The Southern New England (Massachusetts and south) lobster stock is overfished but no longer experiencing overfishing. A rebuilding plan has been implemented by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission but the stock is not rebuilding as expected due to environmental conditions and continued fishing pressure.
- Management regulations include minimum and maximum size limits, prohibition on the possession of egg-bearing lobsters or female v-notched lobsters (lobsters of a reproductive age marked by fishermen), limits on landings with non-trap gear, and maximum trap sizes.
- Traps, the most common method of harvest, have a minimal effect on the surrounding environment and bycatch is generally low and released alive.
- The most substantial ecosystem impact is the entanglement of endangered right whales in ropes connecting lobster pots and buoys. Lobster fishermen are now required to use sinking or neutrally buoyant groundline and vertical lines that include a weak link allowing whales to break free of the line when entangled.

## Info for Chefs

- Maine alone accounts for over 70-80% of U.S. lobster harvest, and 50% of this is caught in during the fall. If area specific information is available, source lobster from the Gulf of Maine.
- Canada's lobster harvest primarily occurs in the spring and supplies a large segment of the U.S. market; Canadian lobster fisheries are moderately sustainable, but not as sustainable as the U.S. fisheries.
- A substantial number of U.S.-caught lobster are shipped to Canada for processing then are exported back to the U.S. and labeled "product of Canada". Ask your supplier for information on where the lobster was harvested.