



Yellowfin Tuna Fact Sheet



Image courtesy of Duane Raver

Basic Biology

Latin name: *Thunnus albacares*

Range: Tropical and subtropical waters throughout the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans

Habitat: Open-ocean

Diet: Yellowfin tuna are opportunistic feeders, preying on a wide variety of fish and invertebrates

Age and growth: Most yellowfin tuna can reproduce at 2 to 3 years of age (39 inches in length) and only live 7 to 8 years

Sustainability

- The Atlantic yellowfin tuna stock is not overfished or experiencing overfishing.
- Because yellowfin tuna are a highly migratory species, crossing international boundaries, they are managed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). In the U.S., the federal government implements the regulations developed under ICCAT through the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan.
- ICCAT mandates a minimum size limit to protect juveniles; however some countries lack enforcement and harvest many juvenile tuna. To further protect juveniles of all important tuna species, the U.S. has a larger minimum size than required by ICCAT.
- Management in the U.S. include permits, logbooks to report catch, and bait and gear restrictions and closed areas to reduce bycatch of billfish, juvenile swordfish and sea turtles.
- Atlantic yellowfin caught by U.S. fishermen are usually harvested with longline, a method by which multiple hooks are hung from a horizontal line stretching many miles and left to fish over a period of hours. U.S. longline fishermen are required to use circle hooks and mackerel bait to reduce the incidental catch of sea turtles and participate in workshops on the safe handling of turtles. Sea turtle capture does occur, but most are released alive. Dip nets and line clippers must be carried and used on all pelagic longline vessels to aid in the release of sea turtles. In addition, longline vessels must carry a Vessel Monitoring System (satellite tracking) and must move gear after any interaction with a protected species (turtles, marine mammals etc). Longline vessels are also randomly selected to carry fisheries observers to collect data on harvest, bycatch and protected species interactions.

Info for Chefs

- Off the Atlantic coast of the U.S. yellowfin are present year-round. In the summer, distribution expands northward, as fish follow warming waters. In South Carolina, May is the peak season.
- Only about 25% of the yellowfin tuna sold in the U.S. are caught by U.S. fisheries, including the Atlantic (15%), Gulf of Mexico (35%) and the Pacific (50%) fisheries.

Info for Servers

- Another common name for yellowfin tuna is ahi; ahi means "fire" in Hawaiian and is used in reference to the flashes of yellow on the tuna's body and fins.

Sources: Seafood Handbook, 2005 Edition.

National Marine Fisheries Service, FishWatch – www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/