



Sea Scallop Fact Sheet



Basic Biology

Latin name: *Placopecten magellanicus*

Range: Northwest Atlantic Ocean from Newfoundland to North Carolina

Habitat: Adults congregate on rocky and sandy seafloor at depths of 60-360 feet

Diet: Filter feed on plankton

Age and growth: Lifespan up to 20 years but most rapid growth is during first half of life

Reproduction: Reach reproductive maturity at two to four years of age

Sustainability

- The Atlantic sea scallop population is healthy and overfishing is not occurring. Populations are monitored with annual surveys and harvest is managed by limiting the number of fishermen, the time they can spend fishing or the amount of scallops they may harvest.
- Scallop populations are maintained by rotating harvest areas, similar to a farmer following a field. Vessel Monitoring Systems (satellite tracking systems) are required on all scallop boats to monitor and enforce these closures.
- Most scallops are harvested by dredge (90-95%) or trawl (5-10%). Both dredges and trawls are nets that drag across the sea floor and can damage habitat. Some areas are closed to fishing completely to protect valuable habitat. These gears can also generate substantial amounts of bycatch including fish, juvenile scallops and sea turtles. Bycatch is reduced and minimized with seasonal area closures and gear modifications to allow species to escape or prevent them from being caught at all.

Info for Chefs

- Scallops are processed at sea because the meat comprises only 12% of their weight. The meat is kept on ice or frozen and the remainder is discarded at sea.
- "Wet" scallops have been soaked in a preservative such as tripolyphosphate to maintain texture and taste, but also absorb excess water. "Dry" scallops are untreated. "Diver" scallops are hand-harvested by SCUBA divers, though this term has been used incorrectly to identify scallops that have not been treated with chemicals.
- Divers account for <0.1% of harvest (in 2008, only 14,000 lbs out of a total of over 53,000,000 lbs) nearly all of which are from Maine during the winter. Check with your purveyor each time you order scallops to find out if they are true "diver" scallops.

Info for Servers

- The U.S. sea scallop fishery is the largest in the world. This population was overfished in the late 1990s. New regulations were implemented and the population was rebuilt by 2001.
- True "diver" scallops are hand harvested by SCUBA divers, primarily during the winter. This term is often used incorrectly to refer to large scallops that have not been treated with chemicals. Check with chef before describing a scallop as a "diver scallop".

Sources: New England Fishery Management Council - Scallop Fishery Management Plan - www.nefmc.org

NOAA Fisheries, FishWatch - www.noaa.fishwatch.gov and

NOAA Fisheries, Commercial Fishery Landings Data - www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/commercial/index.html