

# How to Safely Thaw & Prepare Frozen Fish

## Thawing Frozen Fish

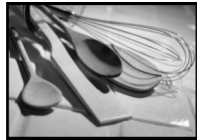


*To prevent wasted water, the tap should be set to "drizzle."*

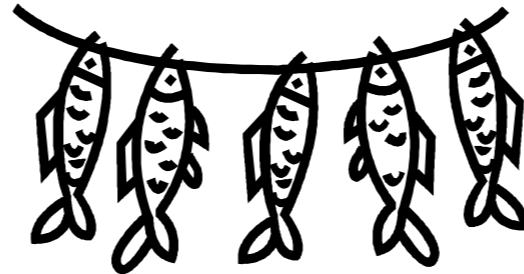
- Wash hands with soap & warm water before handling fish!
- When thawing fish, it is best to do so slowly to keep the juices from leaking out.
- Do not thaw fish at room temperature! Bacteria that cause sickness grow rapidly at warm temperatures (40°F to 140°F).
- The best way to thaw fish is overnight in the refrigerator.
- If you must thaw fish quickly, seal it in a Ziploc bag & place it in cold water. The fish should be completely covered with the water. Another option is to place the fish & bag in a clean dish & let cold tap water run over the fish. *Forewarning: Warm water thawing of fish water-logs the fish & ruins it.*
- Fish can be thawed in a microwave, on "defrost" setting, but it must be cooked immediately after thawing is done. *Forewarning: Thawing in a microwave could turn fish rubbery.*

## Leftover Fish

- Leftover fish should be put in freezer or refrigerator within 2 hours of cooking. If fish is left at room temperature for more than 2 hours (or 1 hour in hot weather) harmful bacteria can grow, making the fish unsafe to eat.
- Always use clean utensils & storage containers for leftovers.



- Divide large amounts into small portions that fit in small, shallow containers for quick cooling.
- Cooked fish stored in refrigerator must be eaten within 3-4 days. Cooked fish stored in the freezer must be eaten within 2-3 months.
- Heat leftover fish to an internal temperature of 165°F before re-serving. Leftovers that are just "warmed" and not heated can cause food poisoning.



Information in this flyer is adapted from the following resources:

1. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). <http://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforconsumers/ucm077331.htm>
2. Clemson University Extension. [http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/food\\_safety/handling/hgic3508.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/food_safety/handling/hgic3508.html)

- For more information on preserving by canning, smoking, or safety when eating fish from Lake Roosevelt, contact Kayla Wells, Family & Consumer Sciences Educator with WSU Colville Reservation-Ferry County Extension, (509) 634-2306, [kayla.wells@wsu.edu](mailto:kayla.wells@wsu.edu), or stop by the WSU Colville Reservation Extension office at 9 Methow St., Bldg. #888 at the Tribal Agency Campus.
- Cooperating Agencies: Washington State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA FRTEP Award #2009-41580-05326), the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Colville Agency BIA, and Ferry County, Daniel L. Fagerlie, Project Director, [fagerlie@wsu.edu](mailto:fagerlie@wsu.edu).
- Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported to your local Extension office.

## Cooking Frozen Fish



- Wash hands! Clean fish in cold water. For faster cooking, portion fish prior to cooking.
- Fish is cooked when the meat begins to flake easily when tested with a fork. Cooked fish will lose its see-through, or raw, appearance.
- **The USDA suggests cooking fish until it reaches an internal temperature of 145°F. Use a meat thermometer to be sure your fish reaches the proper temperature.**
- Follow the 10-minute rule for cooking fish if it is being baked, broiled, grilled, steamed, or barbecued. This rule applies to fillets, steaks, or whole fish. *Do not use the 10-minute rule if cooking fish in the microwave or deep fryer.*
- **10-Minute Rule:** Measure the depth of fish at its thickest point. If fish is stuffed or rolled, measure after stuffing or rolling. At 450°F, bake fish for 10 minutes per each inch of thickness, flipping the fish halfway through the cooking time. For example, a 1-inch thick fish should be cooked for 5 minutes on each side. Pieces of fish less than 1-inch thick do not have to be flipped. *Add 5 minutes if fish is cooked in foil or sauce. Double the cooking time for fish that has not been defrosted.*

## How to Properly Prepare a Frozen Fish that Remains Whole

What happens when you have a fish that hasn't been cleaned & still has its head & guts?

- Thaw your fish according to the guidelines on this poster.
- Like normal, you must clean your fish, using cold water, prior to cooking.
- If you are choosing to cook the fish whole, you need to remove the guts & gills, as well as slit the fish every 3 inches to make sure it cooks evenly.
- If you do not want to cook the whole fish, don't waste time gutting the fish & removing the gills— just fillet it!
- Fish can be cooked with the skin on, it's your choice whether you eat the skin.

