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Is There a Difference Between "Wild" vs "Farm Raised" Fish?



With mercury scares abound, many consumers feel they are making a healthier choice by choosing farm raised fish over the wild-caught variety. Many are not aware that farm-raised fish have their own problems.

Are there any nutritional differences?

We're glad you asked! FDA statistics on the nutritional content (protein and fat-ratios) of farm versus wild salmon show that the fat content of farmed salmon is excessively high--30-35% by weight. Wild salmon have a 20% higher protein content and a 20% lower fat content than farm-raised salmon. Farm-raised fish contain much higher amounts of pro-inflammatory omega 6 fats and less usable omega 3 fats than wild fish. Normally, we tend to get too many omega 6's in our diets and need more of the omega 3's. Balance is key, neither of the fats are "good" or "bad" but "variety" is what you should look for. When a food is eaten that contains high amounts of omega 6s in proportion to its content of omega 3s, the omega-6 fats use up certain enzymes which produce a pro-inflammatory condition.



Halibut Delight: 4 Servings

Earth Balance Spread
Halibut (about 4, 6oz pieces)
2 Fresh Lemons, sliced
½ Sweet Vidalia Onion, sliced
Salt, to taste
2 Tbl Dill

Preheat oven to 350°.

In a heated saucepan, add 2-3 tablespoons of Earth Balance Spread and the juice of 2 lemon slices. Brown 2 pieces of the Halibut on both sides. Repeat for the other 2 pieces. [Keep adding more Earth Balance Spread if needed]

Arrange the browned fish in an oiled casserole dish. Sprinkle with salt, cover with lemon and onion slices. Sprinkle with dill. Cover and cook in the oven for 15-20 minutes. Check the fish for doneness by using a fork to gently flake the fish. When it flakes easily, it is done. You can also put extra lemon slices on the dinner table.

Problem: Farm-raised fish do not spend their lives vigorously swimming through cold ocean waters or leaping up rocky streams. They spend their lives as "couch potatoes", lazily circling in crowded pens fattening up on pellets of fish chow...not the normal life nor feed of the wild variety. For example, farm-raised coho salmon has been found to have approximately 2.7 times the total fat as wild samples.

Antibiotics & Pesticides

Disease and parasites, which would normally exist at relatively low levels in fish scattered around the oceans, can run rampant in densely packed oceanic feedlots. To survive, farmed fish are vaccinated as small fry. Later, they are given antibiotics or pesticides to ward off infection.

PCB's

Research published by the Environmental Working Group on July 30, 2003, indicates that levels of carcinogenic chemicals called PCBs found in farmed salmon purchased from U.S. grocery stores are much higher than levels of PCBs found in wild salmon that they pose an increased risk for cancer.



Synthetic Pigment Colors Flesh Pink in Farm Raised Salmon

In the wild, salmon absorb carotenoids from eating pink krill. On the aquafarm, their rich pink hue is supplied by canthaxanthin, a synthetic pigment manufactured by Hoffman-La Roche. Fish farmers can choose just what shade of peach their fish will display from the pharmaceutical company's trademarked SalmoFan, a color swatch similar to those you'd find in a paint store. Without help from Hoffman LaRoche, the flesh of farmed salmon would be a pale halibut grey.

There is debate on whether the canthaxanthin when added to the fish food poses any human health risk. Canthaxanthin has been linked to retinal damage in people when taken as a sunless tanning pill. This led the British to ban its use as a tanning agent. It is still available in the U.S.

In summary, wild caught fish are going to be more nutritious than your farm raised variety. All of us should try to minimize our exposures to antibiotics, PCB's and pesticides in our environment. Refusing to buy farm raised fish can be one step in that direction.

Simple Trout:

4 servings

2 whole trout fillets [4 halves]
Earth Balance Spread
Salt and pepper, to taste

This may look rather bland and simple but you will be amazed at how good this really is. Try to get a really nice and fresh piece of fish. In a deep skillet, heat about 2 tablespoons of the EB spread. Salt and pepper the flesh side of one piece of the fish. Saute, flesh-side down until lightly browned. Turn fish to continue cooking with the skin side down. Cover and cook until the flesh flakes easily with a fork [usually 10 minutes]. Repeat this process for the rest of the fish.

Mediterranean Salmon

2 servings

2 – 6-8oz pieces of Salmon
1 Organic Orange
1 Mango, diced
4 slices of Avocado
2 tsp fresh or dried Parsley

Preheat oven to 375°. Grease a small baking dish. Place salmon in the dish, squeeze the juice of the orange onto the salmon. Cover and bake salmon for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and add the mango, avocado and parsley. Cover and bake for another 10 minutes.

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1. The information provided in this article is for educational purposes only.

2. Your individual health status and any required health care treatments can only be properly addressed by a professional healthcare provider of your choice. Remember: There is no adequate substitution for a personal consultation with your chosen health care provider. Therefore, we encourage you to make your own health care decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified health care professional.