



# Coast Notes



A Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service Publication

VIMAS is a cooperative program between

the University of Puerto Rico Sea Grant College Program & the University of the Virgin Islands' Center for Marine and Environmental Studies.

## Storing fish and seafood

There are many ways to store fish, depending on how and when you'll be eating it.



### Refrigerating fish

If you'll be eating the fish within a day or two of its purchase, store it in the refrigerator following these simple instructions.

First and most important, remove the innards and gills. Then wash the fish with cold water and, if you have the time, prepare the fish with salt and pepper or other seasonings. As soon as possible, place the fish in a well sealed container and store it on an upper shelf in the refrigerator at a temperature of 35° F (4°C).

Do not keep whole fish, fillets, or pieces in the refrigerator for more than 1 or 2

days. If the product will not be used during this time, then freeze it.

### Freezing fish

If you purchase already frozen fish and will not be using it that same day, store it in the freezer immediately. Do not allow it to thaw.

If you will be eating fresh fish two or more days after its purchase, freeze the fish following these instructions to keep it at its best.

Freeze the fish at a temperature of 0°F (-18°C) or colder in the form you plan to use it (whole, fillets, steaks, nuggets, etc.).

Fish should be stored in packages containing portions suitable for one meal. Label each package denoting the type and amount of fish contained inside, and the date it was purchased and stored.

Each whole fish (completely cleaned) should be stored separately from other pieces.

It is important that the meat be frozen quickly, so don't delay freezing. Put each package in the freezer as soon as it's prepared, and don't try to freeze too much at one time.

Plastic wrap should adhere firmly to the fish in order to protect it from moisture, humidity, and freezer burn. After wrapping the fish in plastic, place it in aluminum foil. Store packages in the freezer, preferably in direct contact with the walls, as this will accelerate freezing. Reduce the temperature of your freezer if possible.

Try to use the product before too long, and remember to *use those packages that have been stored the longest, first.*

The length of time fish can be frozen depends on the amount of fat it contains. Fish with high fat content, such as tuna or mackerel should be kept frozen only up to 3 months. Leaner fish like grouper and snapper can be kept for up to 6 months.

### Defrosting

The defrosting process is just as important as the freezing process. Defrost fish as rapidly as possible, but never at room temperature or in warm water.

The best way to defrost fish is to place the entire package under cold running water, making sure that the water covers the package uniformly. The packages of fish may also be defrosted

in the refrigerator. Remove the wrapping if you'll be defrosting in the microwave. Or simply cook the fish while it's still frozen. *Never refreeze fish once it has thawed.*

### Fresh Seafood

**K**eeP seafood such as shrimp, octopus and other crustaceans and mollusks refrigerated at about 35°F (1°C) for no more than one day. If you won't be using the product within 24 hours, freeze it according to our instructions for freezing fish. Each package should contain portions sufficient for preparing one meal.

### Cook fish or seafood

**S**tore cooked fish or seafood in the refrigerator or freezer depending upon when you'll be using it. Cooked fish or seafood will last 3-4 days in the refrigerator. Be sure to place it in a well sealed plastic container. Cooked fish and seafood can be stored for up to 3 months in the freezer. Just follow instructions for freezing fish, above.

### Canned products

**K**eeP cans in a cool and dry spot for no longer than one year. Never store fish or other canned products in an opened can. After opening, immediately transfer any unused portions from the can into a plastic container with a tightly fitting lid. Store it in the refrigerator for no more than 3-4 days.