

American Shad

When the white blossoms of the shad bush burst forth each spring, it's time for the American shad to return to New York's rivers. Like salmon and striped bass, shad spend their adult lives at sea and return to the rivers of their birth to reproduce. Most of the local shad available in NY is caught when the fish migrate into the Hudson and Connecticut Rivers in April and May. But shad is available in NY markets from May through October.

According to NYSG fisheries specialist Dave MacNeill, populations of American shad existed in the Great Lakes and its tributaries because of stocking efforts back in the 19th century. Today, rare sightings are in the St Lawrence, if at all. But American shad runs are on the increase in the Hudson River. Hudson Valley specialist Nordica Holochuck reports that weekend festivals and shad bakes to celebrate the shad's return are a special "rite of spring" hosted by several Hudson River communities each May.

The American shad has a deep body, silvery to blue-green in color, and large scales. A Native American legend says that the shad began as an unhappy porcupine who complained to the Great Spirit and was turned inside out and cast into the water. This legend helped explain why the shad is often considered the world's boniest fish!

Boning shad is quite an art so you are better off buying shad already cut into fillets. Be prepared for a unique culinary experience. Shad's scientific name is *Sapidissima*, meaning "most delicious." Because they are caught during their spawning migration, the females are full of delicious roe. But, females are also more desirable because they are larger and fatter.

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Science to
the Shore*

Broiled Shad with Herbs & Onions

Ingredients

2 pounds shad fillets, skin on
1/4 cup olive or vegetable oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon grated onion
1 teaspoon paprika
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon crushed thyme
dash of salt
chopped parsley
lemon wedges

Shad can be prepared in a variety of ways. It is moderately fatty with a delicate rich flavor especially suited to pan-frying, broiling, baking, hot smoking, or grilling. Shad roe is best pan-fried or sautéed and was traditionally served with scrambled eggs as a breakfast treat. Because shad was historically available only during the run, a variety of methods are used to preserve it. Pickled and smoked shad products and planked shad can be enjoyed at spring shad festivals and purchased from specialty markets during the season.

Method

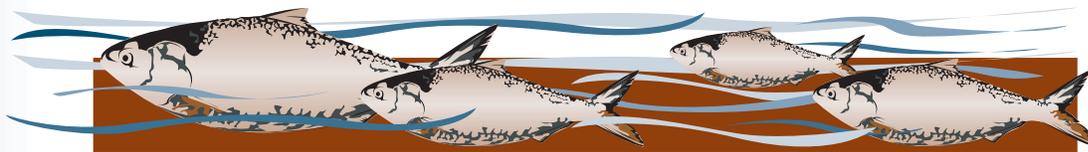
Cut fillets into serving-size portions if necessary. Combine all ingredients except fish, parsley and lemon wedges to make a sauce. Place fish, skin side up, on well-greased broiler pan. Brush with sauce. Broil about 3 inches from heat source for 5 minutes. Turn carefully and brush other side with sauce. Broil 5-7 minutes longer or until fish is lightly browned and flakes easily when tested with a fork. Sprinkle with parsley and garnish with lemon wedges.

Serves 4. Preparation time 20 minutes.

Courtesy of New York Seafood Council.

Notes by

— Barbara A. Branca and
the New York Seafood Council



New York Sea Grant

121 Discovery Hall
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, New York
11794-5001

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