

Wild Salmon

Quality Guide



Bord Iascaigh Mhara
Irish Sea Fisheries Board

Wild salmon that are damaged due to poor handling diminish the reputation of the entire fishery. Supplying the market with a consistent high quality product is vital for the wild salmon industry to thrive.

1 Removing from the net

Some net markings will occur but removing salmon roughly from the net, particularly against the direction of the scales, can cause bruising and heavy scale loss. In addition pulling the fish by the tail can dislocate the backbone and cause blood to seep into the fillet. Make sure that whenever the salmon are handled they are pulled or held by the head and not by the tail.



Don't pull fish by the tail

2 Stunning

Fish should be stunned as quickly as possible after being brought on board. If fish are not stunned scale loss and bruising are inevitable as fish thrash around on the deck. It will also make removal of the fish from the net easier.

Stunning is particularly important when draft netting as fish can be badly damaged struggling on a rough shore. To avoid this the net should be hauled in on an area clear of rocks and other obstructions and the fish removed from the net as quickly as possible and stunned. Salmon should



Fish should be removed from a draft net as quickly as possible

It is therefore important to handle the fish carefully and chill it quickly.

Following these 5 simple steps will help you improve your handling.

When using a net hauler fish must not be allowed to pass through the rollers. Remove fish before they reach the hauler or keep the section of net with the fish clear of the mechanism. Otherwise bruising and backbone damage could ruin the fillet.

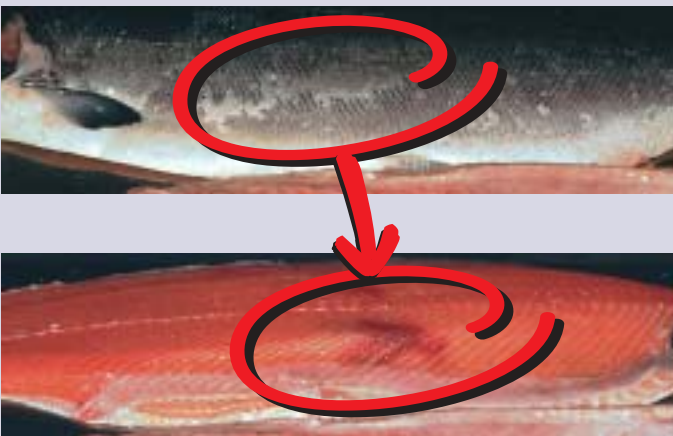


Careful removal of the catch

be stunned by a blow on the snout, not on the back of the head or shoulders.

A prolonged struggle causes excessive scale loss and also reduces quality as the longer a fish struggles before it is killed, the higher the risk of bruising, gapping of the fillet and mushy flesh.

Excessive scale loss is an indication that the fish could have internal bruising!



Heavy scale loss often means there is internal bruising

3 Bleeding

The highest quality fish are bled as this minimises blood traces in the fillet. Stunned fish are ideal for bleeding as the heart will pump the blood from the fish and it dies quickly and painlessly. To do this at least three of the gill arches are cut. Only the gill arches should be cut through and care must be taken not to damage the collar area. The blood should be



Cutting the gill arches

4 Gutting

Gutting should only be carried out once bleeding is complete. Extreme care should be taken, as careless gutting is worse than not gutting at all.

Fish must be gutted along the centre line from the vent to the base of the pectoral fins or about 3cm behind the “V” of the neck.

Guts should be removed intact by cutting through them where they attach to the back of the head. They can then be removed intact by firmly pulling them up and back towards the tail of the fish. To remove blood in the kidney and associated veins, the back of a spoon must be used as it is blunt and rounded and will not damage the fillet. The kidney, a deep red mass that runs along the backbone, should be slit open from head to tail with the tip of a knife and then, using the back of the spoon, scraped out and removed by gently sliding the spoon along the backbone.

Fish should be washed thoroughly, ensuring there are no traces of blood or guts left in the gut cavity.

Tidy gutting with no damage to the cavity walls is essential!



Step 1: Insert the knife through the vent opening

washed away by placing the fish in a water bin with the deck hose running for no more than 10 minutes as otherwise the gill colour will fade.

Bled salmon is prized for smoking!



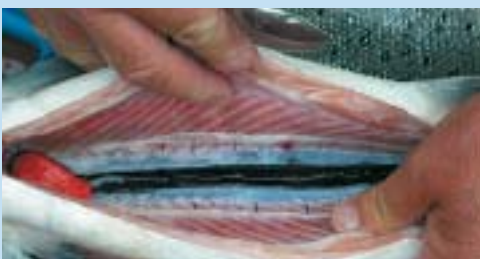
Wash away the blood



Step 2: Cut towards the head leaving 3cm behind the "V" of the neck



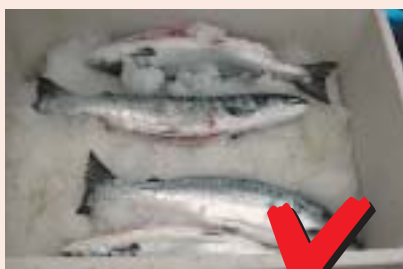
Step 3: Remove the gut material



Step 4: Remove the kidney with the back of a spoon

5 Boxing and icing

Low temperatures slow down the rate of spoilage. Temperature management has a major influence on salmon quality. Immediate chilling of the catch is essential. If the boat has no insulated ice hold, sealed insulated bins kept on deck are essential for icing and holding salmon at sea. Wild salmon should be boxed correctly to maintain quality.



6 Vessel hygiene

A 'clean as you go' approach should be adopted. Knives and oilskins should be kept clean at all times. At the end of every day's fishing wash down the deck, hold, insulated bins and any boxes used with clean seawater and a stiff bristled brush. Detergent should be used if items are particularly dirty.

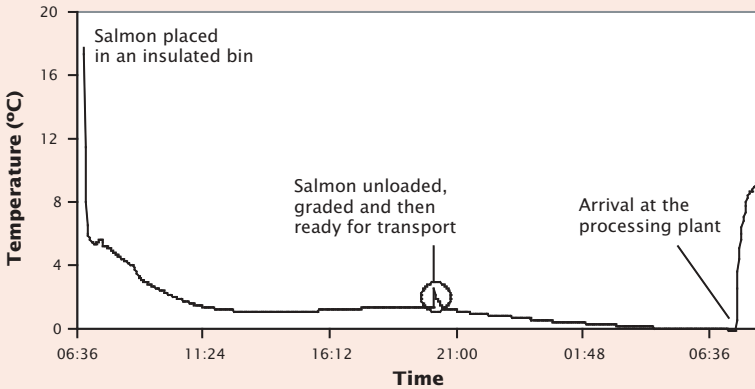


When finished for the day ensure everything is properly washed down and tidily stowed.

Round salmon should be placed on a layer of ice, on their back, each layer in one direction, with the next layer on their back in the opposite direction.

Gutted salmon should be placed on a layer of ice, cavity down, with each layer facing in one direction. Ice should be placed in the gut cavity but only sufficient to maintain the natural shape of the salmon.

Chilled salmon to 2°C maximises quality!



Temperature profile recorded for salmon iced at sea

The boat and all equipment should be thoroughly cleaned using detergent and food grade disinfectant at the end of every week. Rinse afterwards with clean seawater to remove any residue.

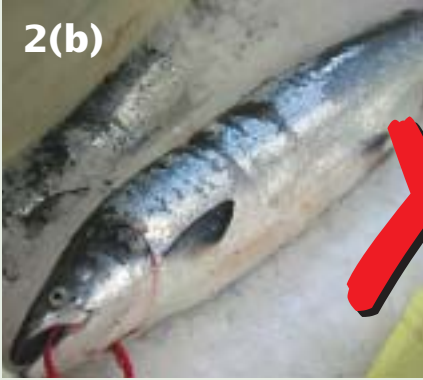


A little care every day keeps everything clean and hygienic

7 Ensuring premium quality!

Eyes	Normal in appearance, bright and clear
Gills 1(a), 1(b)	Good colour - uniformly red, easily separated
Fish firm	Resilient when subjected to finger pressure
Odour	Seafresh or odourless
Good skin condition	Firm, bright, shiny, clear mucus, no desiccation, no predator damage (no open wounds on the flesh, tail intact)
Net damage 2(a), 2(b)	No deep indentation on the dorsal surface further than half way down the pectoral fin
Scale loss 3(a), 3(b)	No more than 30% scale loss





7 Ensuring premium quality! (contd.)

Consequences... Tell-tale signs!



Heavy net damage resulting in a broken backbone and severe bruising



The result of net markings near the pectoral fin



Bruising before smoking... doesn't look so bad



Not iced, open to the elements, looks awful



Light bruising due to net markings



Non-bled salmon



Bruising after smoking... looks much worse!



The result, mushy flesh and gaping



FINANCIAL INSTRUMENT
FOR FISHERIES GUIDANCE



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