



Sally's Galley

By Sally Oulton

Sushi & Sashimi - The Ultimate Raw Fish Delight

Years ago, many of us may have screwed up our nose at the thought of eating raw fish - and some of you may still be a little hesitant about the idea. If that is so, I have to say you are missing out on one of the most delicious and healthiest ways to eat fish.

Today, the opportunity to eat raw fish is wonderful, as more Japanese restaurants and sushi bars pop up around the place. It would have to be one of the healthiest 'fast foods' around. It is ready to eat at your convenience and to top it off, it is also one of the tastiest.

Due to these sushi bars we tend to associate raw fish with the Japanese, but it isn't only our Asian neighbours who like to eat their fish raw, but also the Mexicans, West Indians and French Polynesians to name a few. They enjoy their raw fish prepared as *ceviche*, where the fish is marinated in lime, herbs and coconut milk. It is delicious - but I will talk about ceviche in another issue.

Raw seafood is such a delicacy that I encourage everyone to try it at least once. If you enjoy it, you don't have to go to a restaurant, you can actually enjoy it with the fish you have caught yourself right off the back of your boat, or off the beach. It is just a matter of knowing a few key things and how to prepare it. In this column I will share with you a general guideline on how you can make sushi and sashimi.

First of all, many of you may wonder what the difference is between sushi and sashimi. Sushi is raw fish with rice. Sashimi is just sliced raw fish.

Sushi is made with strips of fish

served with vinegar-flavoured rice. It is either wrapped in sheets of nori (seaweed) with the rice, or the rice is pressed in a mould in your hand with the raw fish placed on top.

Sashimi is thinly sliced fish. It is traditionally served on its own as a Japanese entrée along with a glass of sake. Sashimi is a great way to enjoy the fish. The true essence of the fish comes through and with just a dab of soy sauce it enhances the flavour and is delicious. Salmon and tuna take well to being served this way.

Both sushi and sashimi are made

Salmon, wahoo, mackerel and coral trout are also delicious and together combined they make a colourful presentation.

The key rules are:

- It must be made with the **highest quality edible fish.**
- **It has to be fresh.** After you have gutted and bled your catch, before you eat it raw, I would refrigerate it for an hour at least. This will also make it easier to slice the fillets thinly. If you do not have the ability to refrigerate the fillets, you can still eat it. I have eaten raw tuna that I have caught straight away, but



with other seafood as well, including eel, octopus, squid, clams, abalone, scallops, prawns, crab, salmon roe and sea urchin roe. In this column I will only talk about how you can make it with the fish you catch.

So what types of fish can you use?

All types of fish can be prepared for sushi and sashimi. However the stronger-tasting oily fish are best. Tuna would be the most popular as it makes excellent sushi and sashimi.

that is a little too warm for my liking so I prefer to eat it chilled first.

- **Quality and freshness is paramount. Keep your gutted fish or fillets wrapped in some glad wrap and place on ice in your esky or in the refrigerator.**

- Pollution in oceans and rivers affect the quality of fish. So be aware of where you are fishing. Sushi and sashimi is prepared from saltwater fish, not freshwater fish. Freshwater



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fish can contain parasites that are killed by cooking the fish. If you are concerned about parasites in saltwater fish, you can still eat your fish raw but freeze your fish for 24 hours at -20°C. This will give it enough time to kill any parasites.

- Sashimi is most hazardous when the sashimi is fugu. Fugu is the term used to describe raw fish prepared using blowfish, globefish and pufferfish. I don't think this is available in Australia and if you were to try this, it would only be in a Japanese restaurant by a highly skilled chef trained in this profession. So don't try sashimi prepared with these types of fish or any fish you know that is poisonous.

- Fish that you can try as sushi and sashimi include: sea bass, wahoo, garfish, coral trout, red snapper, kingfish, mackerel, albacore, salmon, tuna and bonito to name a few. The tuna belly is the highest grade of tuna and fetches exorbitant prices at the Japanese fish markets.

How to make sushi:

Firstly you will need to visit an Asian grocery shop or the Asian section of your local supermarket. There you will find all the things you need to make sushi. These include a bamboo mat, nori sheets, sushi vinegar, wasabi, pickled ginger and sushi rice. It is getting the rice right that makes good sushi. The reason to use sushi rice (or short-grain rice) is that it has the right balance of starches to allow the rice to stick together and keep it intact.

Simply follow the instructions on the package of sushi rice. It will explain how to cook it and then how much vinegar and sugar to sprinkle over it while it is warm. Then you will need to assemble.

- Place the nori sheet shiny side down on your bamboo sushi mat.
- Position nori sheet about 2.5 cm from edge of mat closest to you, and leave some space on each side of nori sheet.
- Wet your hands and spread vinegared rice evenly over the nori sheet, leaving 3cm on far side uncovered.
- Take a dab of wasabi on your finger and wipe across the rice. See photo.
- Place strips of your fish over the



Editor's Note: 36 yr old Sally Oulton was born in Perth, did a stint in NZ for five years, before settling in Dubbo, NSW where she grew up with her family. Leaving Oz in 1994, she travelled to Europe, did the secretarial thing for three years - and then changed course to study cooking in 1997. After her first cooking assignment (in the '97 Admiral's Cup) she spent the next ten years at sea - all over the world - in an extraordinary career that has so far embraced 60,000 miles at sea in everything from crack ocean racing yachts in Europe and South America, 'white yachts' in the Med, Caribbean and the Whitsundays - to Oz game boats off the Ribbons. Now back home, with her partner and a 19' Haines, they plan to explore the GBR via trailerboat.

wasabi. You can add any other fillings that you desire here too, such as strips of cucumber or avocado.

- Starting from the end with the fish lift the sushi mat and roll into a cylinder. Dampen the end of the nori and apply gentle pressure to join.
- Use your fingers to make sure roll is properly closed.
- Roll the entire roll once more, exerting gentle pressure.
- Wet knife and slice roll in half and cut twice to give six equal-sized pieces. Repeat with remaining nori and rice.

I enjoy my sushi with tuna, a little wasabi, some sliced avocado and toasted sesame seeds sprinkled throughout. Dip it into a little soy sauce, wasabi and put a little piece of pickled ginger on top.

If you're not sure about raw fish, try it with some cooked fish and experiment with other vegetables. And how about smoked salmon with some cream cheese?

How to make Sashimi:

Remember it doesn't have to be perfect. You can make it any shape you want. The way you see it in restaurants is mainly for presentation. At home, who cares?

Generally speaking, fish that can be cut into steaks are well suited for sashimi as they are easily cut into the rectangles people see as sashimi. When it comes to cutting your fish, there are several basic techniques you need to know.

When you fillet your fish look

closely and remove any bones. If you have an oily fish such as tuna or mackerel, hold the knife at a 90-degree angle to the fish, and cleanly slice through. This is called the straight cut. If you have a less oily fish such as sea bass or snapper, turn your knife on a slight angle and slice it as smoked salmon is sliced. This is called the slant cut. Always cut the fish across the grain of the fish and cut your fish into thin slices – about 3mm thick.

Alternately, cut it into how thick you would like to eat it. Cutting across the grain ensures the resulting slice is tender and has an attractive crosscut grain pattern. Draw the blade across the fish in one long stroke to complete the slice. If you do not complete the slice in one stroke, lift the knife out of the cut and carefully repeat the slicing motion in the same direction. Avoid using a sawing motion as this could damage the fish.

If you were one to indulge in this type of cuisine regularly I would invest in a sashimi knife that is long, thin and sharp as a razor. If you can't find a sashimi knife, try a boning or filleting knife. Before slicing, sharpen your knife on a whetstone or steel to ensure that you can slice your fish easily.

Arrange slices on a platter with grated white radish, some pickled ginger, soy sauce and wasabi. Wasabi is a hot green Japanese horseradish that gives you that lovely fiery rush through the nose and sometimes makes your eyes water if you have too much. So only try a little to begin with. Wasabi can be purchased as a tube of paste or in a powder form that you mix with a little water.

Other things to think about:

- Don't keep sushi or sashimi for more than a day.
- Never use fish with a fishy odour.
- Remember only eat raw fish that is at its freshest. Otherwise cook it up.
- If buying fresh fish for sushi or sashimi, buy from the fish market, not the supermarket. Often the fish and seafood is imported and has been frozen.

I like to enjoy my sushi and sashimi with a little warm sake. So sit back relax and as they say in Japanese 'Meshi agare!'

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