



Sally's Galley

By Sally Oulton

It's Snapper Time!

Snapper is one of Australia's most popular edible fish. It is a delicious, tasty, sweet fish and easy to cook. Not only is popularity due to its flavour but also its great fighting abilities. They often leave us with fond memories and a determination to try and catch an even bigger one next time.

Snapper is a related species of the bream family and is also known as Cockney, Old man snapper, red bream and even 'pinkies' in several states. It is a lovely, colourful fish with its upper body varying in colour from red to pink with a silvery belly and various spots. You will find some of the mature snapper to be easily identifiable with a distinctive hump on their head. They have been known to reach weights of up to twenty kilos. The more juvenile snapper is elongated and narrow in shape and is also known as a rugger snapper or a squire. Don't mistake snapper for other species that bear the name 'snapper' such as the king snapper. This is one of the tropical snappers.

Snapper are a schooling fish and will travel in large numbers of similar age. They inhabit southern Australia coastal waters from the southern end of Queensland down the eastern seaboard to Victoria, South Australia, up the west coast of Australia and off the coast of Tasmania. According to the Southern Australia fishing guide, they believe South Australia has the densest numbers and the biggest in size in Australia.

Snapper are a deepwater fish and a bottom dweller and can be caught along the Continental Shelf to about two hundred metres. You know when you've caught one because they tend to give a typical double shake of the head before they dive for cover under a nearby reef. Not only will

they feed over reef, but also around wrecks and artificial reefs, and often caught off rocks and break walls.

Meanwhile, juvenile snapper can be found in shallow waters in estuaries, bays, off the beach and inlets.

The best time for catching snapper is at dawn or dusk, and with the changing of the tides. I've often heard fishermen say it is also a good time to fish before a full moon and if you use berley, the snapper may feed better. There are strict bag limits and they vary in areas around Australia ranging from one to ten per

particularly Japan as it is an ideal fish for sashimi.

Recently, the annual 'Australian Snapper Championships' were held in Whyalla. It is regarded as one of the glamour fish of saltwater fishing and is an important recreational and commercial species. All of the top ten catches at the tournament were above ten kilos with the winner a whopping 13.88kg.

Not only is size and the challenge reasons we love to catch snapper, but also as I mentioned at the start, we love to catch snapper because it is delicious and succulent to eat with



person. Do check with fisheries for size and the bag limit in your area.

Snapper is also farmed in Australia in NSW, South Australia and Western Australia. Due to the size restrictions on wild stocks caught, there is a domestic market for plate sized farm snapper, that being around 400 grams, which are great for serving whole. There is also an export market for snapper,

a mild, sweet flavour.

It is also a wonderful fish to cook, being a versatile, moist finfish that is suitable for cooking in many ways. Poaching, steaming, frying, baking, grilling, barbecuing, smoking or simply sliced raw and eaten as sashimi are all common.

In fish shops around Australia you typically buy it prepared in batter and deep-fried served with tartare sauce



Oh, yum! Hey guys, Sally is sure challenging our thinking - and taste buds - on the preparation of some of these meals. When it's all said and done, this is disarmingly simple and can be achieved with mouth-watering success in either an old style camp oven, hot coals in a camp fire - let alone something as clever as an OVEN on a boat!



and a wedge of lemon. Another popular way it's prepared (and a favourite of mine) is lightly crumbed and fried. In Thailand, I learnt to cook it their way by leaving it whole – wings, head and all – scored well on both sides, and deep-fried. It was served with chopped coriander and sweet chilli sauce, and it was delicious!

For the smaller rigger snapper, I like to cook it whole as it has a sweet, tender flesh that is ideal for baking whole. With more mature snapper, filleting is ideal for frying or baking. I love the crispy skin when fried in butter and oil. It is quick and easy to cook. As with all fish, the trick is not to overcook it!

For frying fillets of snapper, simply lightly dust snapper skin with flour. Heat some butter and olive oil in a shallow pan and bring to high heat until it is foaming. Place the snapper skin side down in the pan and cook for 4 minutes. Turn and then remove from pan. I enjoy it served with a ratatouille or on top of a mushroom risotto, or simply served with chips and fresh steamed greens.

One of my favourite ways of serving snapper is to bake it whole with diced onion and tomatoes, crushed garlic and 'Herbs of Provence' around the fish. Over the years I have served this up for many of the boat owners I worked for, and they have loved it. It's a great way to



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.

impress your guests and looks great on a plate on the centre of the table. In saying that, I do remember serving a whole fish for some American owners and they freaked out because I had left the head on. I never did do it again for them.

If you're out in the boat or camping, and don't have access to an oven, you can simply bake it over a fire or on the barbeque. The trick is to wrap it up in foil and follow the same instructions as you would for baking.

F&B

Aaron Concord's mate Emanuel Eliadis with a superbly conditioned 76.5 cm snapper caught on plastic in Moreton Bay.



Snapper with diced tomatoes, onions and Herbs of Provence

Dice a couple of onions and tomatoes. Mix together in a bowl and drizzle some good quality olive oil and a clove or two of crushed garlic. Season with salt and pepper and sprinkle a desert spoon of Herbs of Provence.

Herbs of Provence can be bought at the supermarket but for better quality spices, buy Herbies from your local deli. Herbies spices are a local Australian brand and of exceptional quality.

Herbs of Provence is a traditional blend of aromatic herbs that flourish in hills of southern France during the hot summer months and consist of bay leaf, thyme, fennel, rosemary, chervil, oregano, tarragon, mint, and marjoram. It is great for roasting, particularly on fish, tomatoes and potatoes. If you can't find Herbs of Provence, try a good quality mixture of Italian herbs.

Make sure you have gutted and cleaned your fish carefully.

Preheat your oven at 180°C. Line a large roasting pan with foil, and drizzle in a little olive oil.

Use a sharp knife and cut 3 slashes about 1 cm deep into the thickest part of the flesh on both sides of the fish. Place the fish on top of the foil tray.

Rub the fish with olive oil and season with some salt and pepper.

Sprinkle the diced onion and tomato mixture around the fish and inside the cavity.

Bake for 15 minutes or until just cooked through. For small fish, bake for 10 minutes. To test for "doneness", gently lift one side of the cavity skin with a knife to check that the colour of the flesh has changed from dull to translucent to light and opaque. Transfer the fish onto a serving plate. The eyes of the fish should be cloudy and almost white.

Scoop the onion and tomato mixture on top of the fish. This will have soaked up all the juices from the fish as well.

If barbequing, place the scored fish on some foil and surround the fish with onion and tomato mix. Cook above the coals for 15 minutes or until ready.

Try a lovely drop of Sauvignon Blanc to drink with your catch!

Bon Appetit!

** Our thanks for some information gathered from Australian Seafood User's Manual*