

# Preparing Your Catch Like A Professional

Introducing an interesting new mini-series on how to prepare - **scale, fillet, skin, debone or slice** - your catch in order to achieve the highest yield, the best flavour, and by definition, the most **value**. Words and pics by John and Sam Yates, working in Adelaide with SAMTASS Seafoods.

## THE BUTTERFLY FILLET

This is the technique used to obtain a butterfly fillet and it is this method of filleting a fish that probably intrigues most fishermen at some stage. Although a mullet was used in this demonstration many of our smaller table fish such as garfish, small salmon and tommy ruff (to name just a few) can all be treated in the same manner.



**1** Starting with a plump fresh mullet.



**2** Commence by scaling the fish.



**3** Behead the fish. Note that the cut starts at the nape of the fish and is angled so as to include the removal of the pectoral fins.



**4** Cut through the belly of the fish until the vent is reached and then gut it.



**5** Laying the fish on its side commence a cut that will separate the lower fillet from the spine. Note that the fillet is not completely removed at this time.

Have you ever stood in front of a fishmonger's display stand and wondered to yourself, "Just how do they get such neat fillets?" I know I have, and to find out, I thought I'd ask the experts, the good folk who do this sort of thing for a living, themselves. Consequently while in Adelaide recently, I trundled on down to Samtass Seafoods at Richmond, where I was fortunate to have Mark Andonas and his team show me the ropes.

Now these blokes were pure professionals and although they were quick, their techniques ensured little went to waste. And I do mean quick. So much so that initially I had to persuade them to slow down just so I could see what they were doing. Lesson one; Never play poker with one who fillets fish for a living! Seriously though, making the most of our dwindling fish stocks is something we all need to bear in mind and it was for this reason the

Samtass Crew were more than happy to pass their skills on. As a result in this and forthcoming issues of F&B, the best methods of preparing some of our more common species of fish as well as a few other sea borne delicacies will be displayed. Some techniques take a bit of practice but there will be plenty of tips along the way to help. So sharpen your knives - but first you had better go and catch yourself a few fish!



**6** Continue cutting along the spine, freeing the fillet at the tail (across the caudal peduncle), but still leaving the fillet attached along the back of the fish.



**7** Now lay the fish so each fillet lays flat and skin side down. Hold the knife blade flat and again working on the lower side of the backbone, remove the spine starting at the head end.



**8** You should now be left with the tail fin attached to the spine which can be discarded or saved for burley and a fillet taking on the butterfly appearance.



**9** Lastly while holding the knife at an acute angle, tidy the fillet up by removing the rib bones and stomach lining by cutting from the inside of the fillet outwards.



**10** There you have it a butterfly fillet with no bones and minimal wastage of flesh. Not that hard, is it?

