

How to Clean and Care for Your Catch

Fishing with family and friends is a great way to spend time together, but taking your catch home and making a meal out of it – that makes it special.

The first part of proper fish care starts before you ever leave the house. If you're going to keep your catch make sure you take along a cooler. Fill it with ice, or fill an old two liter up with water the night before, and freeze it. This ensures your fish are properly chilled when you're going to clean them, and also helps keep your catch fresh until you get home.

All we need to get started is a flat, clean cutting surface, a sharp knife and a fork. You may also want to consider keeping a bowl of salted ice water handy as well to soak your filets in. This helps to finish cleaning them and helps keep them fresh.

Now we're ready to get started!

1. You want to lift the pectoral fin on one side and cut around the head. Let your knife do the work. This isn't as hard as you think, because these bones are going to kind of guide you. Then start cutting along the top of the fish, just until you get halfway down the fish's back fin.



2. Then insert your knife just to the inside of the back fin and plunge it all the way down until the tip comes out by the anal fin.



3. Your next cut will be to go over the rib bones. Sweep back down the center of the fish following the contour of the ribs. Then cut the filet off all together.



The next step is skinning and this is where your fork comes into play. Simply use the fork to pin the skin of the filet down, and lightly glide your knife along the skin itself.



After that you may want to soak the filets in the salt water bath you've prepared. They'll then be ready to cook for that special dinner.



This "How-To" is provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources