

BROWNE TRADING COMPANY

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

John Dory (St. Peter's Fish/St. Pierre) (*Zeus faber*)



WILD CAUGHT

Catch Regions

- Western North Atlantic & Mediterranean Sea
- Coastal Northern New Zealand & Australia

Seasonality

Year Round

Catch Methods

Trawl
Longlines

Yield

(Fillet Percentage)

25-33 %

Flavor Profile:

Moist, mild, sweet

Texture Profile:

Firm with fine flakes

Substitute:

- Sole Fillets
- Snapper Fillets

JOHN DORY IS A UNIQUE FISH that seemingly has no close relative; an odd-looking species that is unlike any other in the seas. However, it is prized for its delicious fillets, and commands high prices largely due to its modest yield. Dory is an oval-shaped, flat-bodied fish – extremely thin - with yellow-brown to a grayish olive green skin which is covered with very fine, tiny scales that are barely detectable (and require not scaling). The ten long spines that jut out from its dorsal fin and a trademark “thumbprint” adorning its side are distinguishing marks.

John Dory is a solitary fish, choosing to swim alone along coastlines in search of smaller prey, which are caught and consumed by an extendable, tube-like mouth hinged with a protruding lower jaw. Market size is generally between 2 and 4 pounds, but Dory have bulked up to 20 pounds or more. Fishery lore has it that this black spot is traced from the righteous touch of St. Peter (The Patron Saint of Fishermen) himself. Hence, “St. Peter’s Fish,” or “*St. Pierre’s Fish*” to the French, are common names. Dory are caught in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean, and halfway around the world along the coasts of New Zealand and Australia. In New Zealand, the native Māori know it as *kuparu*. In the wild, the legendary “thumbprint” actually resembles a large eye, and is probably there to help discourage larger predators (primarily sharks) as well as to confuse and disorient the Dory’s prey – generally school fish such as sardines and squid – while hunting.

The name itself is somewhat of a mystery. It may be derived from *doree*, a name used long ago in some parts of France. Historical accounts attribute the name as a tribute to eighteenth-century actor/celebrity John Quin, who was somewhat of a seafood epicure in his day. Hence the name “John’s Dory,” or “John Dory.” Any name is better than *l’horrible*, as it was known once by French fishermen.

Such a name would (and did) deter skeptics from trying its delicious, bone-free white fillets that firm up when cooked. Dory has a mild taste and a low fat content. Due to its thin profile and large head, the fillet yield is low, only a third of the fish’s total weight. For this reason, Dory is generally not prepared whole – but the remaining weight is excellent for stocks and fish broth. Sautéing, steaming and poaching are all highly recommended, as well as inclusion in soups, stews and bouillabaisse. Some suggest preparing in ways similar to sole for best results – the Dory’s lean meat can become dry if overcooked.

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