

BROWNE TRADING COMPANY

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Sablefish

(*Anoplopoma fimbria*)



FARM RAISED

Harvest Region

Northern Vancouver
Island, British
Columbia, Canada

Seasonality

Year Round

Yield

(Fillet Percentage)

54 %

Flavor Profile:

Unique and Buttery

Texture Profile:

Soft and Velvety with
Large Flakes

Substitute:

- Walu (Escolar)
- Chilean Sea Bass
- Salmon

COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS “Black Cod”, “Alaska Cod”, or even “Butterfish”, the Sablefish is not actually a member of the cod family, nor is it the true butterfish. Rather, it is of the family *Anoplopomatidae*, which is confined to the icy waters off the Pacific Northwest. Due to its extremely high oil content for a white-fleshed fish, the Sablefish is renowned for its rich, buttery flavor. So it’s no wonder it sometimes bears the alias of “butterfish”. Its true name is actually derived from its small, dark brown to black scales, which feel almost velvety to the touch – perhaps like the fur of a sable.

These aquacultured sablefish hail from the only commercial sablefish farm in the world, in the remote and pristine waters of Kyuquot Sound located northwest of Vancouver Island, Canada. Here, they are raised in sea-pens that are almost 100 feet deep – replicating the darker bottom conditions this deep-sea species requires to grow naturally. Raised on specially-formulated organic diets (marine certified 100% fish oil and meal with no hormones or colorants) the sablefish thrive in stocking densities which are lower than most other organic stocks. Harvested upon demand, they are drawn up slowly from the depths and humanely euthanized with a traditional Japanese method that eliminates any tissue damage.

In the wild, sablefish are caught in deep waters off the coasts of the Pacific, ranging as south as Baja all the way to Alaska, mostly with longlines, pots and sunken gill nets. Average size is approximately 10 pounds, but some individual fish have grown to 100 pounds, and have even been estimated by fishery scientists to live up to 90 years of age. Sablefish are long and sleek, distinguished by their dark brown, gray or black scales. Much of the U.S. and Canadian catch is exported to Japan, where it is highly prized for sushi, but it is gaining continuing popularity in America’s fine dining establishments.

The moist, velvety white flesh of Sablefish can be baked, poached, broiled, grilled using a grill basket, or pan-fried. Whole fish (or large fillets) can be roasted with the skin left on. Because of its oil content, it is rich with Omega-3 fatty acids, and can stay moist when both barbecuing and smoking (a technique common for centuries among the indigenous tribes of the Pacific Northwest). However, care should be taken by the inexperienced: it is not suitable for most codfish recipes.

Initially available only to the Japanese, and later the European, Markets, the “Kyuquot Sound Sable Fish” has now found its way into the U.S. It is available fresh – not pre-frozen – and is considered sushi-quality and can be served in raw preparations. Fish are gutted, whole and head on, currently running in the 4 to 6 pound range.

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