

WHY ANIMAL WELL-BEING MATTERS AT THE DINNER TABLE.

EDUCATION

ANIMAL WELL-BEING — STRESS

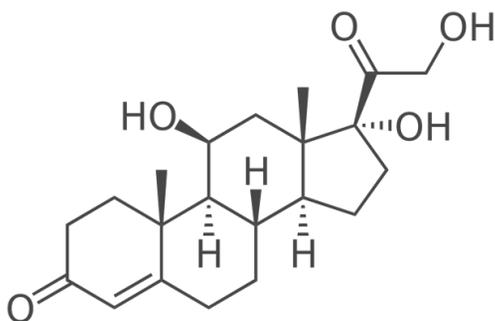
How humane and ethical practices help produce better tasting fish.

There are a lot of questions you might ask when buying a piece of fish. Was this farmed or wild caught? Where is the fish from? Has it been frozen?

While these are all valid questions, there's one more you should be thinking about: Was this fish *happy*? Before you stop reading, consider that there may be a scientific basis to the reason this question matters. Truth is, most of us don't walk around thinking about the happiness of the fish we eat, but we ought to. And here's one research-backed reason why: **The quality of life a fish enjoys has a major impact on the way it tastes.**

Let's take a quick look at the science behind why we can taste the difference between a happy fish and one that's experienced a lot of undue stress.

STRESS ➔ **CORTISOL**



Most people prefer their fish to be tender and moist as opposed to chewy and dry. When a fish is stressed, its body releases a hormone called **cortisol** that can dry out the meat and make the flesh paler. It is known to cause **lactic acid** buildup, which eats away at the quality of the meat and shortens its shelf life. Cortisol can also weaken a fish's immune system, making them more susceptible to disease until they recover. This is not good, because sick fish generally need medication, which should be avoided if at all possible.

Bottom line: Just like humans, stress breaks their bodies down. As such, minimizing stress on fish is not only more humane, it ensures a better experience at the dinner table. Let's take a look at what causes stress...

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What stresses a fish out? A lot of things, actually...

Overcrowding

Fish don't like to be packed into small spaces any more than we do. That's why best practices for fish farming involve lowering the fish density in raceways and providing roomy pipelines with good water flow so the fish can comfortably swim between locations as needed. Even in the best of circumstances these relocations can be unsettling to fish, so it's important to provide plenty of recovery time before harvest to make sure the stress levels have had time to go back to normal.

Handling

Whether struggling in a net or thrashing at the end of a line, handling causes major cortisol spikes and increased lactic acid which have a negative impact on how the fish will taste. Happy fish prefer passive handling methods, where they're encouraged to move throughout the stages of fish farming using methods that mirror how nature shows them where to swim.

Overall Health

Another factor that has a big impact on the happiness of a fish is its overall health. It's important to begin with premium broodstock to ensure healthy eggs. As the fish grow, supplying them with nutrient-rich food and clean water helps them develop strong immune systems that let them deal with the natural stressors of their environment. These powerful micronutrients also impart incredible health benefits to us when we eat these fish, which is why several species of fish have been labeled as superfoods.

Humane Harvesting

And finally, when it's time to harvest the fish, it's important to handle fish gently and to use rapid stun technology that's painless and so fast that the nervous system of the fish never has a chance to flood its body with harmful cortisol or lactic acid.

So take the stress out of buying your fish...

Get to know your farmers and their methods. Choose responsible, sustainable fish producers like Evaqua Farms — ones that prioritize the well-being of your fish. And the next time you're trying to figure out what to serve for dinner, remember: **Healthy fish are happy fish and happy fish are tasty fish.**



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USA RED STEELHEAD OR RAINBOW TROUT?

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