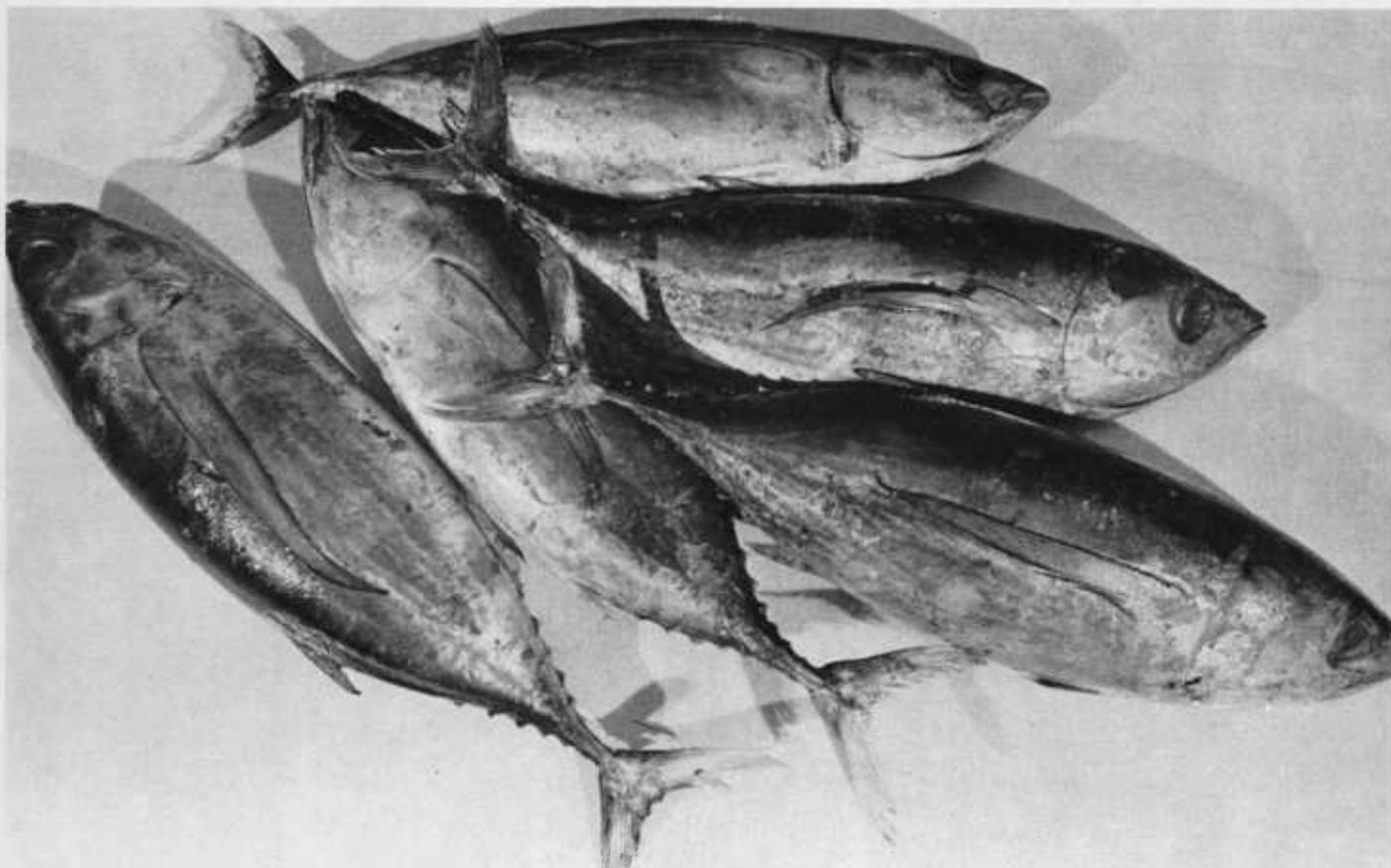


Filleting tuna for canning



Northwest waters provide an abundance of seafoods suitable for home canning, including albacore tuna. Albacore is described as "white meat" tuna in commercial packs. *Canning Seafood* (see "Other Extension publications . . .") gives instructions for precooking tuna before canning, which is the same method used by commercial tuna canners.

However, you do not have to precook tuna before canning. This publication describes one convenient way to prepare tuna for the "raw pack" home canning technique, taking advantage of the unique flavor you obtain by cooking the tuna in its own juices.

Thawing. If you purchased frozen tuna, use one of these two methods for thawing:

- A. Thaw fish in cold water until it is no longer rigid but not completely thawed. Raw flesh is easier to handle when it still contains some ice crystals.
- B. Thaw in a cool place (less than 55°F or 13°C) in a covered container. For best quality, process tuna as soon as possible after it is thawed.

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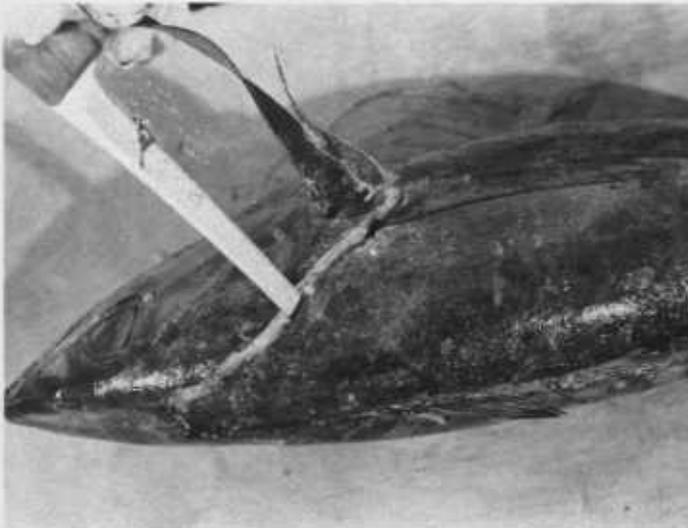
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When filleting any fish, sharp knives are essential for success. The tuna anatomy is different from that of most Northwest fish. Rather than running like a ridge from the top of the head to the tail, the spinal column runs down the center of the fish and is surrounded by four loins that are separated by intermuscular bones.



Begin by cutting down the length of the back along one side of the dorsal fin. Cut completely to the spinal column in the center of the fish, using the dorsal fin and its bones as a guide.



Cut around the gill and pectoral fin (the long fin on the side).



Slide fingers under the skin and peel toward the belly, exposing both loins.



Use fingers to separate the upper loin from bones.



Remove the upper loin completely.



Also use fingers to remove the lower loin, being sure to avoid the entrail sack, which should remain attached to the carcass.



Use fingers to remove the band of dark flesh from the center of each loin. Sometimes knife cuts are helpful for complete removal. The dark flesh is stronger flavored and can affect the delicate tuna flavor. Some people enjoy the taste of this dark flesh. It also makes good pet food.



Some people prefer to scrape the blood vessels and dark areas to ensure a top quality white flesh when canned.



Repeat the process on the other side of the fish.

Points to remember

Remember to follow your home canning directions *exactly*. "Raw pack" tuna is processed 100 minutes at 10 pounds pressure—both pints and half-pints. (Quart jars are not safe; they do not allow even heat penetration.)

Be sure to exhaust steam from the canner before closing the petcock or putting on the weighted gauge. Canner directions will specify the venting time required (usually 10 minutes).

Plan for about one half-pint jar for each pound of whole raw tuna. For example, a whole 10-pound tuna will yield 10 half-pints of canned tuna.

For further instructions on canning tuna and other seafoods, see *Canning Seafood* at your county Extension office.

Other Extension publications about seafood

Hilderbrand, Kenneth S., Jr., *Home Freezing of Seafood*, Oregon State University Extension Service, Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program publication SG 7 (Corvallis, revised 1976).

Hilderbrand, Kenneth S., Jr., *Smoking Fish at Home—Safely*, Oregon State University Extension Service, Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program publication SG 66 (Corvallis, revised 1982).

Raab, Carolyn, *Canning Seafood*, Pacific Northwest Extension publication PNW 194 (Corvallis, Oregon State University Extension Service, revised 1981).



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