

Seafood Survey Results

CONSUMER PURCHASE PREFERENCES



From 1999 through 2018, Americans consumed an average of 14.2-16.5 pounds of fish and shellfish per person each year. This average peaked in 2004 and 2006 and was lowest in 2012 but has since slowly trended upwards to 16.1 pounds per person in 2018 (NMFS, 2020).¹ The most popular seafood during this period included shrimp, salmon, tuna, tilapia, pollock, cod, crab, catfish, and clams. Most of the seafood consumed in the US is farmed overseas and imported.

A sample of over 1,400 people nationwide were surveyed about what seafood they purchased in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic changed their lives and eating habits. Since more than 88% of respondents had bought seafood, results from this survey will be useful for the aquaculture industry as it continues to develop production capacity to increase its ability to supply the United States with seafood.

Survey Response Highlights

- Consumers purchased a variety of seafood in 2019. About 88% purchased finfish; 66% purchased shellfish; and 34% purchased mollusks. The main finfish species purchased in decreasing order are salmon, cod, tilapia, and catfish while shrimp was the main shellfish purchased. Scallops were the most purchased mollusks followed by oysters, clams and mussels.

SEAFOOD CATEGORY PURCHASED



88%
buy finfish



66%
buy shellfish



34%
buy mollusks

78%

OF CONSUMERS

shopped for seafood
at the supermarket



- The main seafood products purchased are mostly supplied from aquaculture production. However, 55% of the consumers surveyed reported purchasing wild-caught finfish, and 47% purchased wild-caught shellfish.
- Among seafood consumers, an equal number (88%) prepared seafood at home and ate seafood in restaurants.
- Many consumers (62%) who prepared seafood at home purchased seafood in-store only, 0.04% from online only and 33% from both.
- In-store shopping was done from a variety of retail outlets. The majority of consumers shopped for seafood at the supermarket (78%), mass merchandisers such as Walmart & Target (61%), club stores such as Costco and Sam's Club (45%), seafood specialty stores (43%), natural grocery stores (40%), gourmet food stores (34%), farmers markets (36%), and food subscription and delivery services (24%).
- Consumers used online ordering, curbside pick-up, and home delivery services for seafood. About 60% of shoppers used one of these services for seafood purchased from supermarkets, 43% from mass merchandisers, 36% from club stores, 39% from seafood specialty stores, 33% from natural grocery stores, 30% from gourmet food stores, 33% from farmers markets, and 44% from food subscription and delivery services.
- How often people purchased seafood depended on where they made their purchases. Consumers generally shopped 2-4 times per month from supermarkets and mass merchandisers, 2-3 times a month to every 2-3 months from club stores; and every 2-3 months or less frequently from seafood specialty stores, natural grocery stores, gourmet food stores, and food subscription and delivery services.

60%
OF CONSUMERS
used online ordering,
curbside pick-up,
or home delivery



- The aquaculture industry producers in the US North Central Region are interested in increasing production with a number of native species such as bass (largemouth, smallmouth), bluegill, walleye, and yellow perch, as well as hybrid striped bass, rainbow trout, and barramundi. When consumers were asked about their interest in buying these species if available, “yes” responses ranged from 21-29% while the “maybe” responses ranged from 26-33%. These ranges were among the highest responses.

1 National Marine Fisheries Service – NMFS (2020). Fisheries of the United States, 2018. U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA Current Fishery Statistics No. 2018 Available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/commercial-fishing/fisheries-united-states-2018>

PURCHASE **FREQUENCY**

among seafood consumers

2 TO 4 TIMES
every month

supermarkets/mass merchandisers

2 TO 3 TIMES
every 2-3 months

club stores

2 TO 3 TIMES
every 2-3 months

seafood specialty stores,
natural grocery stores,
gourmet food stores,
food subscription services,
delivery services

WHAT DO CONSUMERS LOOK FOR?

Survey participants (% indicated below) said the following are important when purchasing seafood

