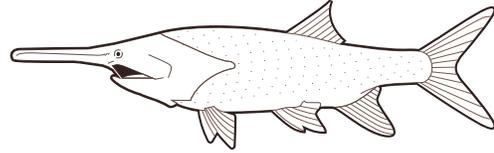


# American Paddlefish

*Polyodon spathula*

Paddlefish lack scales and bones, with one exception— they have a jaw bone. They have smooth skin that is similar in appearance to sturgeon, also a scaleless fish in the order Acipenseriformes, and have skeletons comprised primarily of cartilage. They have small eyes, large mouths, large tapering gill covers, and shark-like tails. They are dark bluish gray, with lighter sides and white bellies.<sup>1</sup> Their most distinguishing feature is their elongated snout, called a rostrum, which looks like a paddle.



## Where do the paddlefish I eat come from?

There are only two known paddlefish species— one native to the Mississippi River basin, and one which was native to the Yangtze River in China. The Chinese paddlefish is believed to have been extinct<sup>2</sup> for some time now, making paddlefish a uniquely North American fish. Paddlefish are primarily produced for caviar, although the meat makes for great table fare. Paddlefish are commercially harvested from the wild, farmed, and even ranched. Paddlefish products are specialty items and, therefore, can be a little hard to find. Paddlefish products can be purchased from restaurants, specialty stores, and directly from producers.

## Why eat paddlefish meat and caviar?

- Lean Protein
- Vitamins & Minerals (nutrient dense)
- Omega 3 Fatty Acids<sup>3</sup>

## Are U.S. farmed paddlefish products safe to eat?

Paddlefish are raised in earthen ponds or ranches in large bodies of water, such as privately owned reservoirs, and primarily feed on zooplankton and aquatic insect larvae. Since paddlefish feed low on the food web, they are less likely to bioaccumulate contaminants than species that eat other fish and spend a high percentage of their lives in contaminated waterways. According to scientists and the Food and Drug Administration standards for mercury, farm-raised paddlefish are safe to eat.<sup>4</sup> Eating farmed paddlefish is a way to obtain a meal high in protein and healthy fats, while protecting wild stock.

## To learn about commercial fish and seafood safety, visit:

Eat Midwest Fish: Advisories  
[eatmidwestfish.org/nutrition-safety/advisories/](https://eatmidwestfish.org/nutrition-safety/advisories/)

EPA-FDA Advice about Eating Fish and Shellfish  
<https://bit.ly/epa-safe-eating-guide>

EPA State, Territory and Tribe Fish Advisory Contacts  
[fishadvisoryonline.epa.gov/Contacts.aspx](https://fishadvisoryonline.epa.gov/Contacts.aspx)

# Zesty Grilled Paddlefish

Prep Time: 20 minutes / Start to finish: 30 minutes

## Serves: 4

1 lb paddlefish  
1 lime, juice & wedges  
2 tsp chili powder  
1/2 tsp garlic powder  
1/2 tsp onion powder  
1/4 tsp oregano  
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper  
(optional)  
Salt and pepper

## Cooking Tips

Paddlefish meat has a firm, dense texture and mild flavor. Healthy ways to cook paddlefish include; broiling, braising, and grilling. Slow cooking methods are recommended. The flavor of paddlefish pairs nicely with garlic, basil, parsley, chives, cilantro, lime, and lemon. Paddlefish caviar has a rich, yet mild, flavor.

- 1.** Squeeze lime juice onto fish. Sprinkle with chili powder, garlic powder, onion powder, oregano, cayenne pepper, and salt and pepper to taste. Let rest for 15 to 20 minutes.
- 2.** Preheat grill or broiler to medium high heat.
- 3.** Place fish on a piece of foil or grilling plate and place on the grill. Grill for 6–8 minutes or until fish reaches an internal temperature of 145° Fahrenheit.
- 4.** Serve with a wedge of lime.

