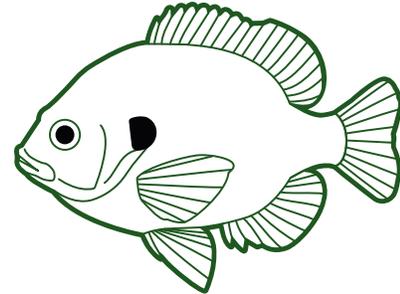


Bluegill

Lepomis macrochirus

Bluegill, also called bream, brim, sunfish, or panfish, are freshwater finfish in the Centrarchidae family. The native range includes the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins from New York to Minnesota south to the Gulf; and Atlantic and Gulf Slope drainages from Virginia to Florida and Texas to New Mexico.¹ They are found in slow moving streams, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs. They have deep bodies; tall and flat sides; and bluish coloration on the gill covers, or operculum. A dark spot at the base of the dorsal fin, small mouth, and vertical bars on the sides distinguish them from similar species.² Often breeding with other sunfish species, resulting offspring can be distinctly shaped and colored.



Where do the bluegill I eat come from?

Bluegill and hybrid bluegill are farmed primarily for recreational stocking or for forage/bait for larger gamefish, and naturally occur in the wild. Due to over-abundance, bluegill are often caught as an angler's first fish or during kid's fishing events. They are typically not commercially harvested from the wild for food. The majority of all bluegill raised for food are farmed in ponds, however, there appears to be growing interest in using aquaponics systems. Bluegill, hybrid bluegill, and other sunfish species can be purchased directly from farmers or pond and lake management companies. To find local businesses in the Great Lakes region selling bluegill visit the Great Lakes Fresh Fish Finder website <https://freshfishfinder.org/>.

Why eat bluegill?

- Tasty
- Source of Protein
- Omega 3 Fatty Acids^{3,4}
- Lean Fish

Are U.S. bluegill products safe to eat?

Fish are exposed to contaminants by way of their environment and by what they eat. Scientists researching contaminant levels of wild fish found that only the largest bluegills, taken from the most contaminated sites, had levels of mercury that exceeded U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) screening levels.⁵ Research indicates it is safe to eat two servings of bluegill a week or more— wild and farmed.^{6,7} There are exceptions.⁸ Check local fish advisories before eating fish caught in public waters.

To learn more about wild caught fish advisories, visit:

Eat Midwest Fish: Advisories

<https://eatmidwestfish.org/nutrition-safety/advisories>

EPA Fish and Shellfish Advisories and Safe Eating Guide

<https://bit.ly/epa-safe-eating-guide>

EPA State, Territory, and Tribe Fish Advisory Contacts

<https://fishadvisoryonline.epa.gov/Contacts.aspx>



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Fish Chowder

Prep Time: 15 minutes / Start to finish: 35 minutes

Serves: 5

1 lb 1" bluegill fillet cubes
4 slices bacon
3/4 cup onion, chopped
1/2 cup carrots, diced
1/2 cup celery, chopped
2 medium potatoes, diced
1 can creamed corn
1 cup heavy cream
salt & ground black pepper, to taste

Cooking Tips

Bluegill is a mild tasting panfish. Their small fillets cook quickly. Frying is the most popular way to cook bluegill—pan, deep and air. Air frying is a healthier alternative to deep frying. Other methods for cooking include stir-frying, sautéing, and grilling. Bluegill is also a delicious addition to soups and chowders.

- 1.** In a large stockpot, brown bacon over medium-high heat. When crisp, transfer bacon to a paper-towel lined plate and remove all but 2 tablespoons of the bacon grease.
- 2.** Sauté onions, carrots and celery until soft and fragrant. Stir in potatoes and cook an additional 2–3 minutes.
- 3.** Add 4 cups of water and raise heat to bring water just to boiling. Then lower the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes.
- 4.** Add bluegill, creamed corn, and cream. Yellow perch or other types of sunfish can be used as a substitution for bluegill.
- 5.** Simmer 5 minutes or until fish is cooked through and flakes apart easily. Serve with reserved bacon crumbled and optional oyster crackers on top. Enjoy!

