

CARP: FROM NUISANCE to Delicious

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Carp for supper?

When I first brought up the idea to my husband his face scrunched up. *Disgusting. Would you eat a goldfish?*

He is not the only one to feel this way about carp. There is a misconception that they are bottom feeders and have a muddy, fishy taste. Actually, Asian carp feed on plankton and algae in upper levels of rivers. Their meat is white, comparable to tilapia.

Duane Chapman, a leader of invasive carp research at the United States Geological Survey Center in Missouri, said he prefers to cook up Asian carp to common carp because they are much more abundant and have a better flavor. He suggests eating female carp over male carp because they are “better eating” and have less lateral line red meat and lighter colored flesh.

There are dozens of ways to fillet and prepare Asian carp. Asian carp average between 15 to 30 pounds. The downside to cooking, preparing and eating carp is the significant amount of bones. Some filleting techniques can minimize this problem. Larger fish with larger bones will be easier to clean.

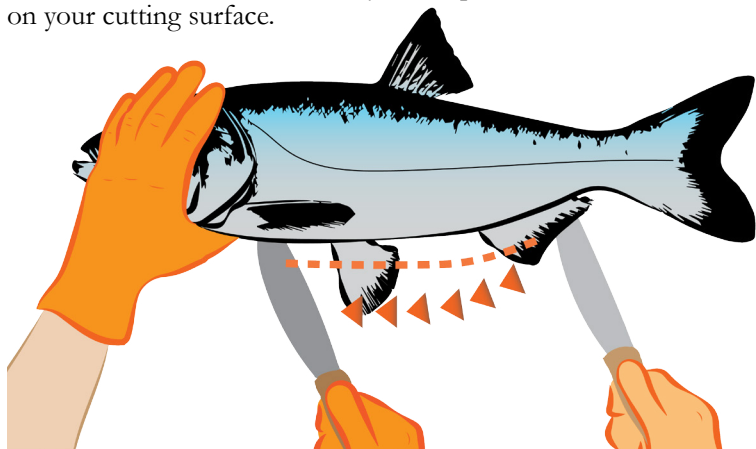
CLEANING CARP

Cleaning a carp is similar to cleaning other fish. Plan to clean your carp one to two hours after catching it or place it on ice until you can get to it. Keep your fish wet until you are ready to clean it.

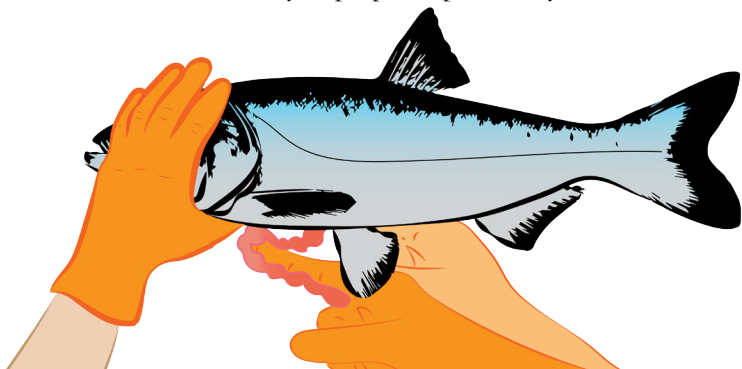
1. Set up a cleaning station. Some designated fishing areas have cleaning stations, otherwise set up a table outside, where you have access to running water. Fish cleaning can be done inside, but carp are generally large and loose scales can get everywhere.

2. Gather supplies. You will need a sharp knife, a bucket for fish parts, a container or bag for cleaned fillets and disposable gloves, if you choose. If you are cleaning several fish, consider setting out a container or cooler of ice in which to place your cleaned fillets.

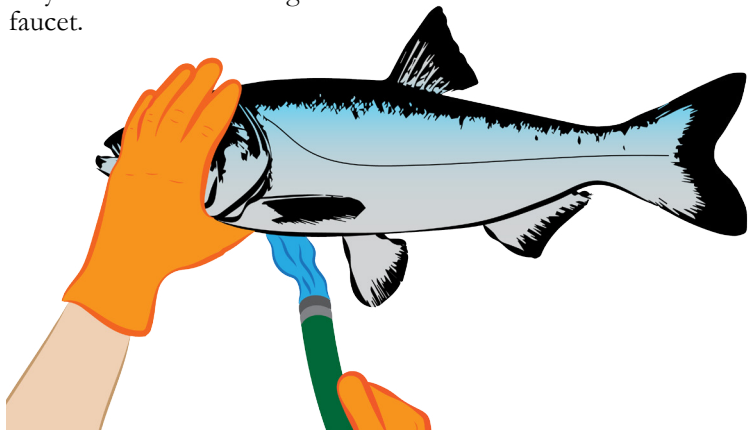
3. Cut your carp. Lay your carp on one side and hold the head firmly with your non-dominant hand. Insert your knife into the anus of the fish (near the tail) and carefully split the carp's belly to the base of the gills. If you have a large fish and you are having a difficult time with this method, your carp can be held on its back on your cutting surface.



4. Remove the entrails. With two fingers, spread the abdominal cavity you just created with your knife and remove all entrails. Place them in the bucket you prepared previously.



5. Rinse your carp. Rinse the abdominal cavity and the outside of your fish with a strong stream of water from a hose or faucet.



FILLETING CARP: BONELESS, SKINLESS FILLETS

1. Slice off the first fillet. Lay your fish on one side. Hold the head with your dominant hand so it is tight against the surface you are working on. Insert your knife parallel to the fish as if you were gutting it, but keep the cut above the ribcage. Slice off a fillet from just below the gill to right before the tail.

2. Cut the fillet in half. Asian carp are generally wide, so cut fillets in half. Lay your fillet flesh-side-up on your work surface, then run your knife lengthwise down the middle to cut it in half.

3. Remove the skin. Keep your fillet pieces flesh-side-up. Starting with the first half of your fillet, hold one end down with the palm of your hand and run the knife along the underside of the flesh to remove the skin. Repeat with the other fillet piece.

4. Remove any red meat. It is normal to find some red meat (called lateral line meat) on your carp. The taste can be pungent, so remove any meat that is not white in color.

5. Remove Y bones from the center of each fillet. A series of Y bones will poke through the top of your fillet. To remove them, cut along both sides, discarding as little flesh as possible. When you are done, you should have eight boneless fillets from your carp.



CARP KABOBS

Serves 6-10

Ingredients

- 2 lbs boneless Asian carp fillets, cut into 5-inch long pieces
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup soy sauce
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dark brown sugar, packed
- 1 Tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 Tablespoon teriyaki or sweet Thai chili sauce (optional)
- 3 teaspoons ginger, grated
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 2 Tablespoons sesame seeds
- 24 wooden skewers

Directions

1. Preheat grill to 400 degrees and spray with non-stick spray.
2. Create the marinade. In a large bowl combine soy sauce, water, brown sugar, garlic, teriyaki or sweet Thai chili sauce, ginger, sesame oil and sesame seeds. Stir until mixed evenly.
3. Add fillets to the marinade directly into the bowl, or in a zip tight bag with the marinade. Let carp marinate in the refrigerator for at least 3-4 hours.
4. Thread each kabob onto a wooden skewer with a back-and-forth motion.
5. Grill kabobs on each side for about four minutes, or until fish is flakey.

FRIED CARP

Serves 6-10

Ingredients

- 2 lbs boneless Asian carp fillets, cut into 4-inch long pieces
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour
- 4 Tablespoons cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups water
- 4-8 cups of canola, vegetable or sunflower oil (amount depends on size of pot or fryer)

Directions

1. Heat oil to at least 375 degrees. Make sure there is enough oil in your pot or fryer to completely cover the fillets.

2. Combine all dry ingredients.

3. Gradually add water, mixing well.

4. Coat fillets in the batter, covering each completely.

5. Fry the fillets in the oil two at a time (to ensure crispiness). Turn fillets after about one minute and remove when golden brown. Fillets should be done in less than four minutes.

6. Drain fillets on paper towels for at least 30 seconds, then serve. ■

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