

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET: WHAT ABOUT THE FISH?

THE DIET REQUIRES ≥ 3 FISH MEALS/WK, AT LEAST ONE OF WHICH IS “FATTY.”

And yet: 1. Large fish easily become a repository for mercury and other heavy metals.¹

2. Other problems: overfishing; too much “slaughter of the innocents” (bycatch); and some fish-farming creates severe pollution.² *We are lucky here in the Pacific NW: Pacific wild salmon is in good supply and Pacific halibut is not yet severely depleted.*

OUR SUGGESTIONS

1. **Great choices for the fatty fish (most of them cold-water types):** *wild Pacific (incl Alaskan & Canadian) salmon; trout (local), incl steelhead (local); & Pacific sardine.* Small fish, like sardine, is the lowest in mercury and other heavy metals.³ [Seawatch.com](http://seawatch.com) maintains a complete list of the relatively safe fatty fish currently on the market"
2. **Other, good choices for fish purchases.** Think toward eating more domestically (U.S.) farmed *catfish*: catfish farming in the U.S. is well regulated. And consider *Asian carp* caught in the Great Lakes, where it is an invasive species: you aid your own health AND the nation's environmental health.⁴ Many good choices are possible otherwise, fishes both wild-caught and farmed. A practical way to keep track of them is to install the *Seafood Watch* app in your smart phone; then you know you are up-to-date with ecological, safety, and good-farming matters (it's free in Apple's App Store). Our favorite fish market in Walla Walla is Super 1: the staff at the fish-counter is well informed, and very helpful if you want something brought in that is not there at the moment.
3. **Must we stop eating tuna to save the dolphins?** If you look for a TTVP certification (Tuna Tracking and Verification Program) before you buy, you support “backdown” tuna fishing which permits dolphins to escape the net system: then tuna becomes another good choice for a fatty fish.
4. **Tilapia—the biblical fish—is a special matter**, low in Hg but also low in omega-3 FA. Most of this (now very popular) fish is imported and farm-raised; the farming practices outside the U.S. & Canada, esp those in Asia, can be atrocious.
5. **Become a locavore, with fish as with other foods, when feasible.** Reduce the carbon-footprint of your diet by reducing the energy needed to import your food from beyond the region.

¹ Scientific American, 11 Dec 2013.

² [Seawatch.com](http://seawatch.com): an excellent source for information on these issues.

³ <http://shine.yahoo.com/healthy-living/12-fish-never-eat-162200617.html>

⁴ Scientific American, September 2013, p. 42-43.