



## Flathead Catfish: The Freshwater Grouper

The flathead catfish (*Pylodictus olivaris*) goes by a number of common names: gougon, opelousas cat, yellow cat, tabby cat, shovelnose cat and several others. It is a well known and highly respected fish for the commercial fishermen (and their customers) of the rivers of middle part of the United States. To these folks, this species is generally known as the best-eating fish in the river. The flesh of young flatheads is very mild and tender, and older fish remain excellent in flavor and texture. This is a major difference with their freshwater catfish cousins, the channel catfish and the blue catfish, both of which get tougher, fatter and stronger-flavored as they grow. In fact, many believe that the flathead catfish actually improves in food quality as it grows.

If the flathead catfish resembles the marine groupers by having excellent culinary qualities, it also resembles them in its feeding habits. While the youngest flatheads eat insects and small crustaceans, when they reach about a foot in length they graduate to eating fish. Large flatheads are nearly completely piscivorous – like the groupers, they are big-mouthed and eat big fish. Other catfish are high on the flatheads' menu, as are sunfish.

Flatheads are a fast-growing species, averaging about 4 inches growth each year in a variety of habitats. Maximum age can be nearly 30 years, and anglers have landed fish up to 123 pounds. In many states, the biggest fish are caught in reservoirs, but that may be simply because more effort is expended there. Louisiana has a recent angling record fish: In July 2007, Roland Lasseigne caught a 95-lb flathead at Wax Lake. The flathead is well-adapted for river life and can be frequently found in fast-flowing sites as well as eddies and backwaters. Flatheads will also do just fine in lakes and reservoirs but generally are not recommended for small ponds. They are just too good at what they do – eat other fish.

Big flatheads tend to be solitary. They aggressively exclude other fish from their chosen place of cover, so that a snag or hole usually contains only one fish. This behavior is also similar to that displayed by big grouper, which will stake out the best territory on a reef or rig.

Native to the Mississippi, Mobile and Rio Grande drainages, the flathead has been introduced to waters both east and west of their native U.S. range. They make an excellent invasive species when



Flathead catfish. Photo credit: Duane Raver, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

put into new waters: They spread quickly and consume native populations of sunfishes and catfishes readily. In many systems, such as the Altamaha River drainage of Georgia, they've had serious impacts on native species, quickly depleting the numbers of redbreast sunfish and bullhead catfish. Efforts at eradication or control have had little success in these places. Most anglers feel that the best approach is just to allow unrestricted harvest of the flatheads.

Commercial fishers take most of their flatheads with hoop nets. The flathead is one fish that will readily enter a shady, small-mesh hoop net. Unbaited nets will out-fish baited ones for this species. Anglers catch small flatheads with worms or fresh cut shad, but the bigger fish are almost always taken on live bait. Bullheads and live bream or shad are considered the best baits, and some Midwestern fishermen specialize in taking only trophy-sized flatheads. Like all trophy fishing, this is a situation where only a single fish might be caught in a day's (or, most often, night's) effort, but it is liable to be a monster. Flatheads are sometimes also taken by hand from shallow lairs by "grabbling," and by sinking wooden boxes that act as artificial stump holes. Occasionally, the water in Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas gets clear enough that divers can spear catfish (including flatheads) in their stumpy dens.

**Sources:** in Catfish 2000: Proceedings of the International Ictalurid Symposium. Erwin, E. R., Hubert, W. A., Rabeni, C. F., Schramm, H. R., and T. Coon, editors. 1999. American Fisheries Society Symposium 24. Flathead Catfish: Biology, Fisheries and Management. Jackson, D. C. p 23-35.

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Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association Fish Records

[http://www.laoutdoorwriters.com/index.asp?pg=fr\\_list&div=3&wt=Freshwater&FishID=22](http://www.laoutdoorwriters.com/index.asp?pg=fr_list&div=3&wt=Freshwater&FishID=22) last accessed 6/22/08

## Web Site Addresses Questions about Red Snapper

New federal rules concerning recreational and commercial fishing for red snapper have raised numerous questions about the regulations and the species' biology. Answers to many of those questions can now be found on the Louisiana Sea Grant Fisheries Web site (<http://www.seagrantfish.lsu.edu/faqs/index.html>).

Experts from Sea Grant, Louisiana State University and the LSU AgCenter have addressed numerous questions ranging from assessment methodologies and catch-and-release survival to life history of the species and basic biology to help keep the public informed. The site isn't meant to be encyclopedic on the topic, but it will provide visitors with background on the basic issues, as well as information on the latest research findings. Updates to the Web site will be made as new information and questions arise.

Topics addressed are:

### **Red Snapper Biology and Life History:**

How long can a red snapper live? How fast does a red snapper grow? When and where do red snappers spawn? At what age can a female red snapper start to spawn? How many eggs can a red



Photo credit: Kim and Ian Workman, Kimians's Art

snapper produce? Where do red snapper live? Do red snapper migrate around the Gulf of Mexico? How likely is it that an under-sized red snapper will survive capture and release?

***Red Snapper Management:***

Who Regulates Red Snapper and Other Fishes in the Gulf of Mexico? What is the Magnuson-Stevens Act? What are the Fishery Management Councils? What is the Sustainable Fisheries Act? What is the difference between overfished and overfishing? When were red snapper first managed? What is the importance of shrimp trawl bycatch? How are red snapper harvests allocated between the commercial and recreational fisheries? Why are fishermen seeing so many red snapper when the assessments say they are in trouble?

***Red Snapper Stock Assessment:***

What kinds of data go into a stock assessment? How are management alternatives identified and applied? What does the Gulf Council do?

**Wildlife Federation Laments LDWF Revenue Issues, Legislative Inaction**

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, and without debate, the Appropriations Committee of the Louisiana House of Representatives deferred Senate Bill 18 which would have dedicated one-twentieth of a penny of state sales tax to the Conservation Fund (Fund). The measure was deferred with the concurrence of the bill's sponsor, Sen. John Alario, who conceded that the proposal needed further evaluation in the context of state finances and budget policy. Alario, Appropriations Committee Chairman Jim Fannin, and several other committee members expressed support for the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries and pledged to come up with a workable funding proposal by the next regular session of the Legislature. The committee was put in an awkward position after Gov. Bobby Jindal announced several weeks ago that he would veto bills that make new dedications of state funds. SB 18 had cleared the Senate on May 1st on a 33-2 vote with 29 coauthors.

The Conservation Fund is the primary operating fund of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries. It receives revenues from hunting, fishing and commercial license fees and other sources. SB 18 would have supplemented the fund with approximately \$40 million a year in state sales tax revenue that is now being allocated to other purposes in the state budget.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries has operated primarily on self-generated funds, federal funds and mineral revenue, with essentially no allocation from the state general fund. Future shortfalls in revenues from license sales, mineral royalties and other sources are anticipated. The fish and wildlife conservation agencies of other states like Missouri and Arkansas receive a significant percentage of support from state sales tax revenue, and as hunting and fishing license dollars shrink in relation to expanding responsibilities, state conservation agencies throughout the country are looking to similar general revenue support to supplement traditional sources.

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Editor: Glenn Thomas

Web coordinator: Melissa Dufour

Copy editor: Roy Kron

Layout/design: Jessica Schexnayder

Current revenue sources supporting the Conservation Fund include: sales of recreational hunting and fishing licenses and commercial licenses, royalties from mineral production on certain state-owned (including department-owned) lands and from extraction of sand and fill material from state water bottoms, assorted fees collected for boat registrations, survey fees, Wildlife Division program fees (such as DMAP), seismic fees and sales of merchandise including *The Louisiana Conservationist* magazine, posters and other printed materials. Declines in recent years in the sales of hunting and fishing licenses, due primarily to senior outdoorsmen and women aging out of the ranks of licensed hunters and fishermen, has caused a reduction in this source of revenue to the Conservation Fund.

Corresponding increases in LDWF expenses, primarily in staff salaries and benefits, but additionally in equipment and fuel costs, expanded mission including emergency preparedness and search and rescue, and from new laws and regulations pertaining to regulating snakes, primates, big cats and other functions not related to the traditional work of the agency, have placed increasing demands on the personnel and financial resources of the agency.

The allocation of state general funds to the Conservation Fund would enable the LDWF to more thoroughly fulfill its mission of habitat conservation/management, biological research, aquatic weed control and enforcement of regulations as well as allow it to more sufficiently address non-game wildlife needs and nuisance wildlife management, scenic rivers, education and outreach, providing fishing and shooting opportunities to underserved communities, and other important functions of modern natural resource conservation agencies. Additionally, the LDWF has pressing needs to update its fish hatcheries, regional offices and facilities on its Wildlife Management Areas, including roads and bridges. Some LDWF buildings are literally falling apart they are so old and worn.

“On more than one occasion the Legislature has recognized the impending funding crisis for the Department,” said Randy Lanctot, long-time executive director of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation. Lanctot noted that the Legislature adopted a resolution (SCR 19) in 2003 authorizing the establishment of a study commission to develop a plan for achieving long-term reliable funding for the LDWF, but nothing ever materialized. He believes that a ‘blue ribbon’ panel including some of the members of the his Wildlife and Fisheries Transition Panel with knowledge and interest concerning this issue, along with other progressive user group representatives and members of the stakeholder community, could be assembled to do some brainstorming on LDWF funding and make recommendations to the governor and Legislature prior to the next regular session.

## **Proposed Changes to Regulations for Gulf Bycatch Reduction Devices**

From June 3-July3, 2008, NOAA Fisheries Service will accept public comment on proposed changes regarding the use of bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery. NOAA Fisheries Services proposes to:

- Decertify the Expanded Mesh BRD
- Decertify the Gulf Fisheye BRD
- Establish a more restrictive placement for the Fisheye BRD.

The intended effect is to improve bycatch reduction in the shrimp fishery and better meet the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

BRDs have been required in shrimp trawls since 1998 for the western Gulf of Mexico, and since 2004 for the eastern Gulf of Mexico. NOAA Fisheries Service recently published a final rule that, in part, revised the certification criterion for BRDs used in the western Gulf of Mexico. This change creates a consistent BRD certification criterion throughout the southeastern shrimp fisheries; a BRD is certified if it can be demonstrated to reduce finfish bycatch 30 percent by weight. In accordance with the framework procedures for adjusting management measures of the Fishery Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico, NOAA Fisheries Service is now proposing to decertify the Expanded Mesh and the Gulf Fisheye BRDs because they do not meet the new criterion, and to establish a more restrictive specification for the Fisheye BRD.

The Fisheye BRD and Gulf Fisheye BRD are the two dominant BRD designs currently used in the Gulf of Mexico. These two BRDs are actually the same device; the only difference between them is in where they are placed within the cod end of the trawl. The Fisheye BRD must be placed along the top center of the cod end of a shrimp trawl no further forward than 11 feet from the cod end tie-off rings. The Gulf Fisheye BRD is the same fisheye-type device that may be placed 15 meshes on either side of top center, between 8.5 feet and 12.5 feet from the cod end tie-off rings, thus expanding the allowable placement of the device in the cod end. These two (overlapping) configurations of the fisheye-type device are also certified for use in the South Atlantic region.

Because of the simplistic design of the fisheye-type device and its low cost, it became the industry standard. The most common placement of the fisheye-type device is over 10.5 feet from the trawl cod end's tie-off. New data collected aboard Gulf of Mexico shrimp vessels indicate that, in this configuration, the device does not meet the 30 percent finfish reduction certification criterion. This proposed rule would decertify the Gulf Fisheye and Fisheye BRDs, as currently defined, for the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery.

However, when placed no farther forward than 9 feet (102-105 meshes) from the tie-off rings, the fisheye-type device has been shown to achieve a 37 percent reduction in total finfish by weight when used by Gulf of Mexico shrimp vessels. There is a 98 percent probability the true reduction rate of the device in this placement meets the certification criterion. The proposed rule would certify the Fisheye BRD in this more restricted specification.

Similarly, it appears the efficiency of the Expanded Mesh BRD, currently certified for use in the eastern Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, has decreased. During the original tests of the Expanded Mesh BRD in the mid-1990s, it achieved a 30 to 35 percent reduction in the weight of finfish bycatch. Recent tests of the Expanded Mesh BRD in the Gulf of Mexico indicate it is only achieving about a 17 percent reduction in the weight of total finfish bycatch. The proposed rule would also decertify the Expanded Mesh BRD in the Gulf of Mexico.

There would be no changes to the allowable BRDs in the South Atlantic. The shrimp fishery in the South Atlantic tends to operate in shallower water and has a different species composition to its bycatch. The new information on the fisheye-type BRDs and Expanded Mesh BRD was collected in the Gulf of Mexico; there are no new data collected from the South Atlantic fishery to indicate the BRDs are not meeting the bycatch reduction targets. NOAA Fisheries Service intends to investigate the efficacy of these BRDs in the South Atlantic fishery before making additional decisions regarding the status of the Fisheye BRD and Expanded Mesh BRD for use in the South Atlantic fishery.

For more information, or to submit comments (by 5 p.m., Eastern Time, July 3, 2008) submit all electronic public comments via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>, or fax:

727-824-5308, Attn: Steve Branstetter, or mail: Steve Branstetter, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

## Gulf Council News

A number of actions were taken at the June 2-5 council meeting held in Houston. Concerning the Reef Fish Amendment (30B – Gag and Red Grouper), a minimum 25 percent reduction in gag harvest will be needed to end its overfishing. Additional reductions from reduced fishing effort will contribute toward meeting the ultimate 40 percent reduction target that will achieve the optimum yield fishing mortality rate. Toward these ends, the council selected a new preferred alternative for Action 9, which sets the recreational harvest of gag and red grouper. The new alternative is expected to achieve a 25 percent reduction in recreational harvest of gag by implementing a four-fish grouper aggregate bag limit, a two-fish gag bag limit within the aggregate, and a two-fish red grouper bag limit within the aggregate, along with a February 1-March 31 closed season. These regulations will also allow approximately a 4 percent increase in recreational red grouper harvest.



**Gag Grouper (*Mycteroperca microlepis*).**  
Photo credit: Dianne Rome Peebles,  
courtesy the artist and Florida Division  
Marine Fisheries Management

Considering Action 11 – Creating Marine Reserves and Time/Area Closures – the council had previously selected Alternative 2, which establishes a new area closure within the gag spawning area - the Edges 40 fathom contour reserve, with all fishing prohibited January-April, all fishing allowed May-December. During the June meeting, the council agreed to add option (iv) – all fishing prohibited March-April, all fishing allowed May-February. They also approved a motion that if a seasonal area closure is ultimately adopted, then the gag, red, and black grouper commercial closure from February 15-March 15 will be eliminated. The council also redefined its preferred alternative for Action 8 – Application of Quota Closures – and included as its preferred an option for a 200-pound incidental harvest trip limit.

Final action on Amendment 30B is anticipated during the August council meeting in Key Largo, Florida. In the meantime, the council requested the NMFS draft an interim rule to address the overfishing of gag until Amendment 30B can be implemented. A draft interim rule will be also be presented to the council in August, with implementation anticipated for January 2009.

In considering Reef Fish Amendment 29, the council will send a letter to the Secretary of Commerce requesting the referendum process be initiated for a commercial individual fishing quota (IFQ) program for grouper and tilefish in the Gulf of Mexico. In accordance with the Magnuson Stevens Reauthorization Act, the council moved to restrict participation in the referendum to persons that have substantially fished in the grouper and tilefish fisheries. Only commercial reef fish permit holders who have combined average annual grouper and tilefish landings from logbooks during the qualifying years of at least 8,000 pounds (per permit) are considered as having substantially fished. Votes will not be weighted by the permit's grouper and tilefish catch history.

The council agreed to send Reef Fish Amendment 29 to public hearings with the following dates and places; meetings begin at 5:30 pm local time and will end no later than 9:00 pm:

July 21, 2008  
 Best Western  
 5914 Seawall Boulevard  
 Galveston, Texas

Radisson Hotel  
 3820 N. Roosevelt Blvd.  
 Key West, FL 33040

July 22, 2008  
 Hilton New Orleans Airport  
 901 Airline Drive  
 Kenner, LA

Banana Bay  
 4590 Overseas Highway  
 Marathon, FL 33050

July 23, 2008  
 Wingate Inn  
 12009 Indian River Road  
 Biloxi, MS

Doubletree Hotel  
 2649 S. Bayshore Drive  
 Miami, FL 33133

July 24, 2008  
 City of Orange Beach  
 27235 Canal Road  
 Orange Beach, AL

Clarion Hotel  
 12635 S. Cleveland Avenue  
 Ft. Myers, FL

July 30, 2008  
 Radisson Hotel  
 12600 Roosevelt Boulevard  
 St. Petersburg, FL

July 31, 2008  
 NMFS Lab  
 350 Dellwood Beach Drive  
 Panama City, FL 32408

The council altered the draft for the proposed Offshore Aquaculture Amendment by including a requirement that a permit be required for any hatcheries located in the EEZ; require that 25 percent of the planned grow-out structures be proposed within the first two years or the applicant must resubmit a new application; allow transferability of permits; remove the prohibition of siting aquaculture facilities in marine sanctuaries; require a benthic habitat survey to permitting; add that

the operator can request modifications to the time schedule and reporting schedules in response to a natural catastrophe; and created an Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan in place of the Generic Amendment for Aquaculture. A public hearing is scheduled for July 21, 2008 at the Radisson Hotel, 3820 N. Roosevelt Boulevard in Key West. The hearing will begin at 5:30 pm and end no later than 9 pm. Final action on the Aquaculture FMP is not anticipated until October.

## **Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project Launches Revised Web Site**

A completely revised Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project Web site is now available at <http://gulfofmexico.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>. The site provides information on both the offshore and inshore debris survey and removal efforts currently underway in the State of Louisiana.

For offshore areas, the Web site provides sonar survey information, including maps where the location of sonar contacts (potential marine debris items) have been found. For inshore areas, the Web site displays survey maps of waterways identified as having debris issues, along with photos of debris, sunken vessels, and the occasional alligator. The content of the site is provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Coast Guard.

For more information visit the Web site or contact [gomdebris@noaa.gov](mailto:gomdebris@noaa.gov).



## **Shrimp Season Update**

The 2008 spring inshore shrimp season in the remainder of Shrimp Management Zone 2 closed on Monday, June 30. Effective with this closure, all of Zone 2 will be closed to shrimping. The 2008 spring inshore shrimp season in Shrimp Management Zones 1 and 3 will close on Tuesday, July 1, at 6:00 a.m. except for the following portions of Zones 1 and 3:

Zone 1: Lake Pontchartrain including Rigoletes Pass from the mouth of Lake Pontchartrain extending eastward to the western side of the CSX Railway Bridge, Chef Menteur Pass from the mouth of Lake Pontchartrain southeasterly to the mouth of Lake Borgne. The Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) beginning at its juncture with the Industrial Canal.

That portion of Mississippi Sound beginning at a point on the Louisiana-Mississippi Lateral Boundary at latitude 30 degrees 09 minutes 39.6 seconds north and longitude 89 degrees 30 minutes 00 seconds west; thence southeasterly to a point at latitude 30 degrees 03 minutes 12 seconds north and longitude 89 degrees 21 minutes 30 seconds west; thence northeasterly to the most easterly point on Isle Au Pitre at latitude 30 degrees 09 minutes 20.5 seconds north and longitude 89 degrees 11 minutes 15.5 seconds west, which is a point on the double-rig line as described in LA R.S. 56:495.1(A)2; thence northerly along the double-rig line to a point on the Louisiana-Mississippi Lateral Boundary at latitude 30 degrees 12 minutes 37.9056 seconds north and longitude 89 degrees 10 minutes 57.9725 seconds west; thence westerly along the Louisiana-Mississippi Lateral Boundary to the point of beginning. The open waters of Breton and Chandeleur Sounds as described by the double-rig line (LA R.S.56:495.1)

Zone 3: The Calcasieu Ship Channel originating at a line between Channel Markers 85 and 86 thence southward to a point originating along the inside/outside shrimp line at Calcasieu Pass as described



in LA R.S.56:495(A) and including East Pass from its origin at the Calcasieu Ship Channel to the south end of Calcasieu Lake and West Pass from its origin at the Calcasieu Ship Channel to the south end of West Cove.

Lake Pontchartrain, Chef Menteur Pass, Rigolets Pass, the MRGO, a portion of Mississippi Sound, Breton and Chandeleur Sounds and a portion of the Calcasieu Ship Channel will remain open until further notice. State territorial waters seaward of the Inside/Outside shrimp line, as described in Louisiana R.S.56:495, will also remain open to shrimping.



The number, distribution and percentage of small juvenile white shrimp within the areas to be closed have progressively increased in recent weeks and these waters are being closed to protect these developing shrimp. Brian Lezina, LDWF Biologist Manager, who supervises LDWF Marine Fisheries Division operations in the Lake Pontchartrain basin stated that “Despite this year’s shortened spring shrimp season, the season extension within Lake Pontchartrain,

Chef Menteur and Rigolets Passes, the MRGO and portions of Mississippi, Breton and Chandeleur Sounds should provide added economic opportunities to shrimp fishermen targeting large emigrating brown shrimp while limiting impacts to developing white shrimp populations found in shallower adjacent waters.”

However, he cautioned that “all or portions of these waters would be closed if sample data and fisheries monitoring indicate unacceptable impacts to developing white shrimp populations or if law enforcement problems develop.”

Mike Harbison, LDWF Biologist Manager, who supervises LDWF Marine Fisheries Division activities in the Calcasieu River Basin noted that “the portions of the Calcasieu River Ship Channel that will remain open also provide opportunity to harvest emigrating brown shrimp in that area, while minimizing impacts to developing white shrimp found in other parts of Calcasieu Lake at this time of the year.”

Paul Cook, Biologist Manager who supervises LDWF Marine Fisheries Division operations in the Vermilion/Atchafalaya Bay complex noted that high Mississippi and Atchafalaya River discharge rates

have influenced both water temperature and salinity levels leading up to the spring shrimp season which caused quite a bit of anxiety among the shrimping industry. Despite cooler water temperatures and extremely fresh water conditions seen at the season's opening, shrimp fishermen have harvested approximately 8.6 million of pounds of shrimp in May (all species combined/heads-off weight) according to preliminary data developed by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

State territorial waters south of the Inside/Outside shrimp line, as described in Louisiana R.S.56:495, will also remain open to shrimping.

For more information, contact Martin Bourgeois at 225/765-2401 ([mbourgeois@wlf.louisiana.gov](mailto:mbourgeois@wlf.louisiana.gov)).

## THE GUMBO POT

### **Sautéed Cobia with Louisiana Crab Butter over Fingerling Potatoes and Caramelized Fennel With Louisiana Jumbo Lump Crabmeat and Vegetable Pearls**

*This is the 2008 winner of the Louisiana Seafood Cook Off, by Brian Landry and Heather Young. Recipe courtesy of Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board [www.louisianaseafood.com/cookoff/chefs/landry.html](http://www.louisianaseafood.com/cookoff/chefs/landry.html). To have it prepared by the originator, consider a visit to Chef Brian Landry at Galatoire's: 209 Bourbon Street, New Orleans, LA 70130 or 17451 Perkins Rd Suite A, Baton Rouge, LA 70810. [www.galatoires.com](http://www.galatoires.com).*

Makes 6-8 servings.

#### Sautéed Cobia

##### Ingredients

8 each Cobia, 6-7 oz portions (Also, try Lemon Fish or Pompano with this recipe)  
2 cups all purpose flour  
2 cups clarified butter  
Salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste

Season fish with salt and pepper, and dust with flour. Cover the bottom of a large sauté pan with clarified butter and set over medium-high heat. Sauté for four to five minutes per side, until golden brown crust is formed.

#### Louisiana Crab Butter

##### Ingredients

5 each Louisiana whole gumbo crabs  
2 lb. plugra unsalted butter (European style)  
½ tsp. paprika  
1/8 tsp. white pepper or dash of cayenne  
½ tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. turmeric

Place gumbo crabs in an 8 qt. (non-reactive) sauce pot. With a food mallet or potato masher, break up shells as well as possible. Add the butter and seasoning to the saucepot and place on a very low flame or burner. Allow shells to barely simmer or stew in the butter for 30-40 minutes. Continue during this cooking time, to crush shells more, to release all crab flavor. Turn off heat; allow crab butter to set for 10 minutes. Strain butter through a very fine chinois or strainer into a stainless bowl. Place stainless bowl with butter over a large bowl filled with ice water. Whisk butter until it starts to solidify and become firm, but not too tight. Place butter into a food processor with an additional 1/3 pound of butter (cut into small pieces). Blend crab butter with fresh butter together.

#### Ingredients

1 shallot, minced  
1 cup vermouth  
Louisiana crab butter (recipe above)

Heat shallot in vermouth in a 2 quart sauce pan. Allow to simmer until liquid in pan is almost dry. Over medium-high heat whisk in crab butter tablespoon at a time until all incorporated. Strain sauce through chinois. Keep in a warm place.

#### Caramelized Fennel

#### Ingredients

3 each large onions, julienne  
3 each fennel bulbs, julienne  
¼ lb. butter

Heat sauté pan to medium-high heat. Add butter, onion and fennel. Turn heat down to medium-low. Allow to cook until they start to caramelize. Deglaze the pan with ½ cup of water to moisten the onion and lift the sugars from bottom of pan. Remove from heat and set aside.

#### Fingerling Potatoes

#### Ingredients

2 lb. fingerlings  
1 cup white wine  
3 cups water  
1 each fresh thyme sprig  
1 each bay leaf  
Salt, to taste  
2 Tbsp. butter

Place all ingredients in 8 quart sauce pot. Turn to high heat, and allow the potatoes to cook until just tender (about 20 minutes). Remove potatoes from water, allow to cool, and then cut on a bias. Add butter to sauté pan on medium-high heat. Add potatoes and cook until outside is browned and crispy.

#### Vegetable Pearls

#### Ingredients

2 each zucchini (pearled)  
2 each yellow squash (pearled)  
2 each carrots (pearled)

2 cups water  
2 Tbsp. butter  
Salt and pepper, to taste

Cut each vegetable with small parisienne scoop. Place zucchini and squash pearls in 1 cup of water seasoned with butter salt and pepper. Simmer until pearls are tender. Do the same for carrots, but in a separate pan (cook time is a few minutes longer).

### Jumbo Lump Crabmeat

#### Ingredients

1 lb. Louisiana jumbo lump crabmeat  
1 Tbsp. fresh tarragon, chopped  
2 Tbsp. butter  
Salt and pepper, to taste

In a sauté pan, heat butter in about 1 cup of water. Add crabmeat and simmer until warmed through. Add tarragon and salt and pepper.

### Plate Assembly

Toss fingerling potatoes with caramelized fennel. Place in center of a large shallow bowl. Place cobia over potatoes. Next, top the fish with 2 oz. of crabmeat. Next, use a sauce spoon to sauce around the fish so that it pools at the bottom of bowl. Sprinkle the vegetable pearls around the sauce.





For more information, contact your local extension agent:



**David Bourgeois** – Area Agent (Fisheries)  
Lafourche & Terrebonne Parishes  
Phone: (985) 873-6495  
E-mail: [dbourgeois@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:dbourgeois@agctr.lsu.edu)

**Thu Bui** – Assistant Extension Agent, Fisheries  
St. Mary, Iberia, and Vermilion Parishes  
St. Mary Parish Court House  
500 Main Street Rm. 314  
Franklin, LA 70538-6199  
Phone: (337) 828-4100, ext. 300  
Fax: (337) 828-0616  
TBui@agcenter.lsu.edu

**Carol D. Franze** – Associate Area Agent  
Southeast Region  
21549 Old Covington Hwy  
Hammond, LA 70403  
Phone: (985) 543-4129  
Email: [cfranze@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:cfranze@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**Albert 'Rusty' Gaudé** – Associate Area Agent (Fisheries)  
Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and Orleans Parishes  
Phone: (504) 682-0081 ext. 1242  
E-mail: [agaudet@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:agaudet@agctr.lsu.edu)

**Thomas Hymel** – Watershed Educator  
Iberia, St. Martin, Lafayette, Vermilion,  
St. Landry, & Avoyelles Parishes  
Phone: (337) 276-5527  
E-mail: [thymel@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:thymel@agctr.lsu.edu)

**Kevin Savoie** – Area Agent (Southwest Region)  
Natural Resources-Fisheries  
Phone: (337) 475-8812  
E-mail: [ksavoie@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:ksavoie@agctr.lsu.edu)

**Mark Schexnayder** – Coastal Advisor (Fisheries)  
St. John, St. Charles, Jefferson & parts of Orleans Parishes  
Phone: (504) 838-1170  
E-mail: [mschexnayder@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:mschexnayder@agctr.lsu.edu)

**Mark Shirley** – Area Agent (Aquaculture & Coastal Resources)  
Jefferson Davis, Vermilion, Acadia, St. Landry, Evangeline,  
Cameron, Calcasieu, Lafayette, Beauregard, & Allen Parishes  
Phone: (337) 898-4335  
E-mail: [mshirley@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:mshirley@agctr.lsu.edu)

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For questions or comments about a story, contact Lagniappe editor Glenn Thomas at [gthomas@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:gthomas@agctr.lsu.edu).

**R. Glenn Thomas**, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor Fisheries  
School of Renewable Natural Resources  
Room 227 RNR Bldg., LSU  
Phone: 225.578.0771 Fax: 225. 578.4227  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
[gthomas@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:gthomas@agctr.lsu.edu)  
Web site: [www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com)



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