

A History of British Columbia Seafood

Significant Events

The coastal aboriginal people were the first fishers in BC, and had been fishing for thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived circa 1770s. The newly established Hudson Bay Company posts depended heavily on dried salmon, which they obtained from aboriginal fishermen. By 1828 HBC started producing preserved salmon. By 1830s, traders at HBC forts throughout the Fraser River drainage area consumed an estimated 50 tonnes of salmon.



1870s Up to 10 salmon canneries are operating in BC. The federal government starts collecting information from processing establishments, and in 1875 Ottawa brings the Fisheries Act to BC.

1880s The number of canneries more than doubles. The first recorded Dungeness crab commercial landings are in 1885.

Canadian Railway is completed in 1887, providing transport for frozen and canned fish to eastern Canada and the US.

The 1888 Fisheries regulations restricts what First Nations can do with their catch.

1890s Commercial halibut fishery begins. Aboriginal people had been fishing for halibut for a long time using cedar hooks baited with octopus.

1900s Almost 70 canneries are operating. BC Packers, a major employer on the coast, is formed in 1902 and operates until 1999.

1910s The number of canneries peak at around 94. World's largest cold storage is built in Prince Rupert in 1911 for salmon.

In 1917, sardine fishery begins at 70 tonnes and increases rapidly to 44,000 tonnes by 1926-27.

1920s The Pacific oyster fishery starts when seed from Japan is introduced into the west coast waters.

Sockeye fishery collapses in 1921 due to Hell's Gate landslide as a result of blasting by the Canadian Northern Railway for a route through the Fraser canyon.

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) is established in 1923.



Aboriginal Spearfishing (1915)



Drying Halibut (1902)



BC Packers (1944), Ogden Point, Victoria



Workers at Steveston Cannery (1952)

1930s A US Canada treaty sets up the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission to manage west coast fisheries and coordinate extensive salmonid research programs.

1940s Sardine population collapses as a result of overfishing in combination with unfavourable environmental conditions for sardine survival.

1950s Estimates for recreational fisheries begin.

1960s Herring stock declines as part of the coastwide collapse from overfishing in the early 1960s, and the commercial reduction fishery is closed in 1967.

1970s Herring stocks recover following a combination of a low harvest rate and favourable environmental conditions. The roe fishery begins in 1972.

The geoduck fishery begins in 1976 and becomes one of the most valuable commercial fishery with majority of products exported to Asia.

1980s Salmon farming starts in 1987.

1990s Individual Transfer Quotas (ITQs) is introduced in trawl fisheries.

Farmed salmon harvests increase over 300% in a decade.

Sardines reappear in BC waters. By 1995 stocks are at levels to provide for a small experimental fishery.

The 108-year old Gulf of Georgia Cannery in Steveston at the mouth of the Fraser River, closed in 1972, reopens as a national historic site.



Fishing Vessels, Prince Rupert



BC Groundfish



A Salmon Farm in BC



Our Global Markets

2000s - Where we are now

- Integrated Groundfish Management Program is launched in 2006. This innovative, world-leading system uses new forms of information technology, including video monitoring, to account for all fish caught and minimize the need to discard bycatch.
- In 2007, six BC fisheries are in full assessment and five are in pre-assessment phase of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Certification for sustainability.
- The 2007 wholesale value of BC seafood is over \$1 billion. The industry continues to be the economic foundation for many communities, providing 8000 jobs and generating \$179 million in wages.
- BC produces over 90 different species of wild and cultured fish, shellfish and plants like Pacific halibut, sablefish, wild and farmed salmon, hake, herring, and geoduck clams.
- In 2007, over 90% of BC's seafood production, worth \$904 million was exported to 66 countries and accounted for more than one third of the value of all food products exports from BC.



Enjoy BC Seafood frozen, canned, smoked and fresh year-round!

Celebrating BC Seafood!

What can I buy at my local market?

Products

When are fresh products available?

Salmon	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Wild Chinook & Coho dressed, steaks, fillets, portions, smoked	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Wild Chum dressed, steaks, fillets, portions, smoked, roe	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Wild Pink dressed, steaks, fillets, smoked, canned, roe	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Wild Sockeye dressed, steaks, fillets, portions, smoked, canned	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Farmed Atlantic, Chinook, Coho dressed, steaks, fillets, smoked, roe	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Whitefish	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Arrowtooth Flounder dressed, fillets	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Dogfish dressed, flaps, backs, fins, tails	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hake dressed, fillets, mince	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Halibut dressed, fillets, fletches, steaks, cheeks	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Lingcod live, dressed, fillets	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Pacific Cod dressed, fillets	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Pollock fillets, surimi, roe	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Rockfish live, dressed, fillets	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Wild & Farmed Sablefish live, J-cut, W-cut, fillets, smoked	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Soles live, fillets	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Other Popular Fish	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Herring roe, pickled, spawn-on-kelp	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Tuna dressed, loins, canned, smoked	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Farmed Trout dressed, steaks, fillets, smoked	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Farmed Finfish dressed, steaks - sturgeon, tilapia	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Wild Finfish skate wings, frozen sardines, mackerel, eulachons, flounder fillets & dressed	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Shellfish	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Farmed & Wild Clams in shell, canned, meat	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Crabs live, in shell, meat, portions, cooked	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Farmed & Wild Geoducks live, body meat, neck meat	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Farmed Oysters in shell, shucked, smoked, canned	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Farmed & Wild Scallops in shell, meat	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sea Cucumber meat, skins	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sea Urchins roe, whole	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Shrimps/Prawns live, whole, tails, cooked, meat	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Other Wild Shellfish squid, octopus, mussels, fresh or dried marine plants	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Other Farmed Shellfish in shell, meat - mussels, scallops, fresh or dried marine plants	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Food safety, traceability and sustainability practices have earned British Columbia an international reputation for safe, reliable, top-quality seafood products.



Pull out poster and seafood shopping guide