

**Description:** Albacore tuna is a finfish distinguished by a dark blue back, and silverwhite sides and belly. Adult albacore tuna have pectoral fins that extend past the second dorsal fin and anal fin. Its flesh is pink when raw and off-white when cooked. Mature albacore tuna can reach as much as 45 kg (100 lbs) although the average market weight is 9 kg (20 lbs).

Albacore tuna has a mild taste and soft texture.

**Product Forms:** Albacore tuna is available fresh, frozen-at-sea, hot and cold smoked, and canned. Fresh and frozen tuna are available as whole fish or portioned as steaks or loins.

**Availability:** Fresh tuna is available from June to late fall with the peak commercial fishery occurring in September. Canned, smoked and frozen tuna are available year round.

**Buying Tips:** The meat of fresh tuna should appear bright and translucent and the texture should be soft and oily. When buying frozen tuna, look for product that is solidly frozen with no apparent freezer burn or film of yellow oil on the skin.

In general, avoid product that includes bruises, blood spots and tears. In addition, the meat should never have a "fishy" or strong odor.

**Storing Tips:** Tuna must be chilled on ice quickly to avoid spoilage and histamine poisoning. While fresh tuna is best used within 24 hours of purchase, it has a 3 to 4 day shelf-life if stored at 0°C (32° F).

Previously frozen and defrosted tuna is best if used within a day. Once cooked, tuna can be refrozen, but do not refreeze uncooked meat.

**Preparation/Usage:** Because tuna has virtually no connective tissue, the raw meat is very soft and must be supported at all times to keep it from falling apart. Albacore tuna must also be kept moist or it will lose its flavor and become tough.

It is important not to overcook tuna as it quickly loses its flavour and moisture. Once cooked, the flesh will become firm and the colour will become near-white. To avoid overcooking, remove tuna from the heat source while the meat is still pink in the center.

With a mild taste and soft texture, albacore tuna lends itself to a variety of preparation methods including grilling, broiling and searing. It is also very popular served raw, sashimi style.

**Area of Origin and Range of Availability:** Albacore tuna is harvested in the warmer waters of the northern Pacific off the west coast of North America from the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia to California.

Albacore tuna is also found in the waters around Hawaii and the East Coast of Japan; in the southern Pacific near New Zealand; and, in the eastern Atlantic off the coast of Spain as far north as the Bay of Biscay, as far south as Africa, and sparsely in the western Atlantic along the coast of North America.

**Harvest Volume:** Approximately 5,000 metric tonnes of tuna are harvested each year in British Columbia.

**Harvest Method:** In Canada, albacore tuna is harvested by pole and line surface trolling. The primary harvest method uses "tuna jigs" which are a relatively large lure containing two barbless hooks and a colourful plastic skirt. The jigs are towed behind the boat along the surface at speeds above five knots and the tuna is then brought onboard live using one of two hydraulic haulers attached along the stern.

**Processing Method:** Once on-board, the albacore tuna is stunned, cut and put into chilled water containers to allow the fish to bleed and cool before being placed on freezer trays located on board. This process maintains maximum quality and fully reduces the build-up of histamine, an organic substance that results in scombroid poisoning if eaten. The fish are frozen as fast as possible to -30°C (-22° F) and stored at this temperature until the fish are delivered to shore.

Once on shore, the albacore tuna are placed in commercial freezers and maintained at the coldest temperatures to stop oil migration.

**Markets:** Albacore tuna is sold in Canada, the United States and Spain. Blast-frozen tuna is sold to the sashimi market in Japan.

**Sustainability:** British Columbia's tuna fishery is governed by the US/Canadian Tuna Treaty and monitored through a logbook program. In addition, the use of barbless hooks in harvesting minimizes by-catch. Furthermore, Canadian fishermen have endorsed the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, which once in force will ensure albacore tuna catches do not exceed sustainable levels.

**Historical and Anecdotal Information:** Use of gillnets (high seas drift nets) thoroughly disrupted harvests of other tuna fishing methods in the 1980s and early 1990s. An international moratorium on the use of high seas drift nets has led to the recovery of the trawl fishery in recent years.

Due to its white meat colour, albacore tuna is sometimes referred to as the "Chicken of the Sea". In fact, it is the only species allowed to be labeled as "white meat" tuna.

### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Per 3.5 oz/100 grams of raw edible portion

|                            |         |
|----------------------------|---------|
| <b>Calories</b>            | 172     |
| <b>Total fat</b>           | 7.2 g   |
| <b>Saturated fat</b>       | 1.9 g   |
| <b>Protein</b>             | 25.2 g  |
| <b>Cholesterol</b>         | 38.0 mg |
| <b>Sodium</b>              | 51.0 mg |
| <b>Omega-3 Fatty Acids</b> | 2.1 mg  |

**Source:** The Complete Seafood Handbook

**Please Note:** A recent mercury analysis test was conducted by SGS Canada Inc. located in Vancouver, BC by chief chemist, Ron Kuriyedath. The test results on total mercury were far below the Canadian Food Inspection allowable standard which is even further below the US acceptable level. The Canadian Highly Migratory Species Foundation will conduct on-going tests which address the alleged risks of pregnant and breast-feeding women eating albacore tuna.