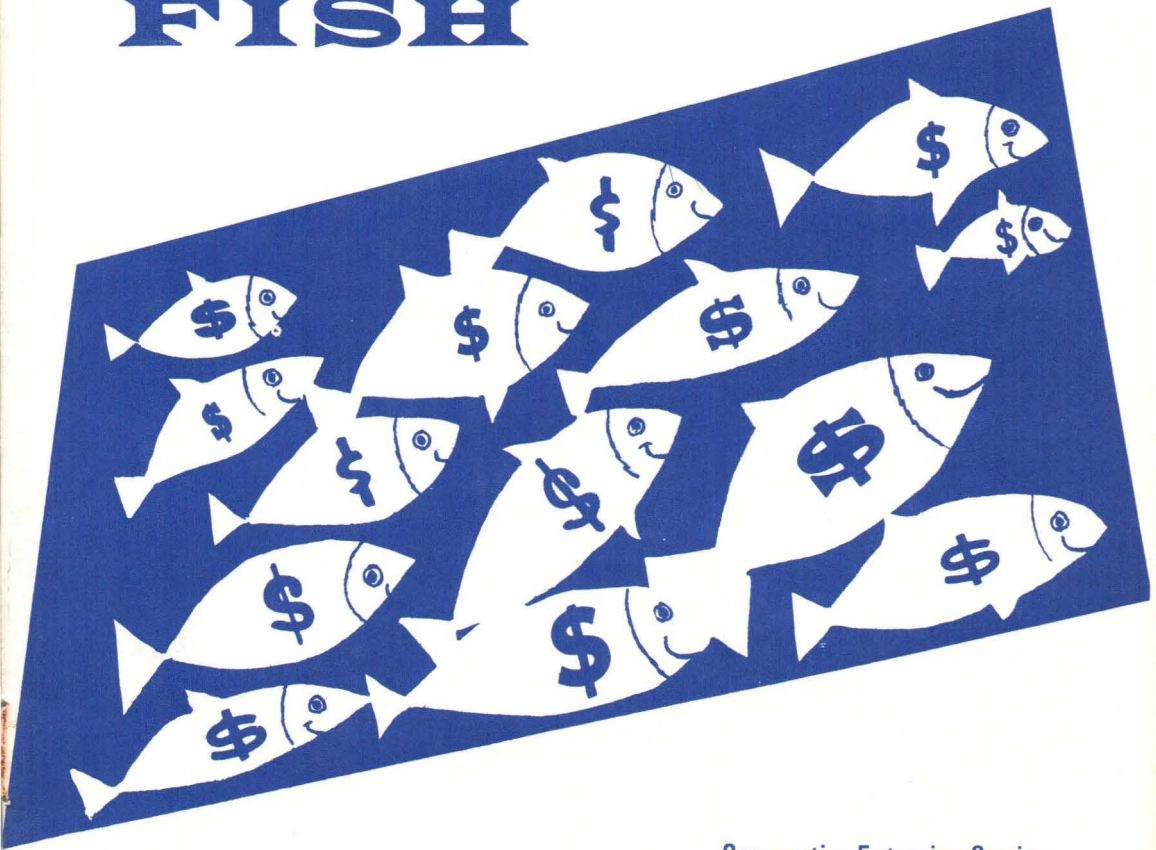


A Leaflet for Food Retailers

INCREASING PROFITS FROM **FISH**



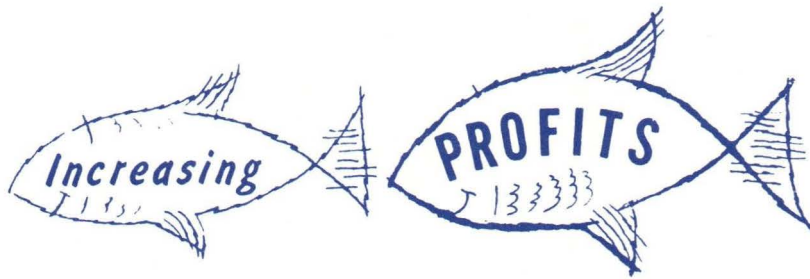
Cooperative Extension Service
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Circular 459

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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from **FISH**

by

JOHN P. CARROLL¹

KIRBY M. HAYES²

PAUL PARADIS³

Fish is a highly perishable product which requires careful handling and proper display to win consumer acceptance. Quality products in a well-run retail fish department attract customers.

An increase in fish department sales boosts volume in the entire store. In addition to acting as a traffic builder, fish returns a high gross margin to the store operator and increased sales of fish can have a favorable effect on the gross margin of the entire meat operation. Selling more fish means selling top quality and using improved merchandising methods to do it.

Recognize The Potential

Unlike most products, fish is expected to sell itself. Little effort is expended at the retail level to promote its sale—the natural selling points of the product are not advertised sufficiently.

Fish is economical and has nutritive values equal to that of meat. A wide selection of fish is available, and it can be prepared in numerous appetizing ways. But only Friday is generally accepted as a fish-eating day. The other days of the week remain as a potential market for fish. Good merchandising of fish during these days can return an added profit.

¹Former Retail Marketing Specialist, New England Extension Services Marketing Education Program.

²Associate Professor, Department of Food Technology, University of Massachusetts.

³Branch of Market Development, U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

Analyze Current Fish Sales

Volume and percentage figures for fish are often in over-all meat department figures. Extract the figures for fish and determine current weekly volume, gross margin and dollar profit. Compare these figures with those for other product groups in the Meat Department. Gross margin alone should be convincing proof that fish is worth promoting.

Your Objectives

To improve the operation of the fish department.

To increase the dollar volume and sales of fish as a percentage of total Meat Department Sales.

Means To An End

Quality is the silent salesman that produces results. Once top-quality fish has been stocked, the next step to increased fish sales is to develop a system of handling at the retail level which will maintain this quality. Then display and merchandise the product for maximum sales impact.



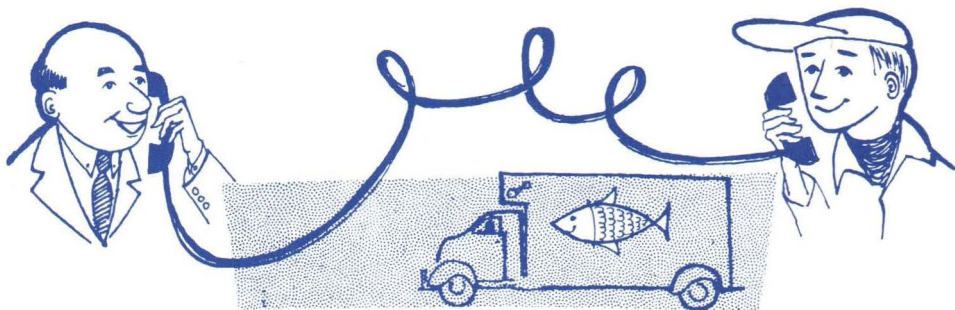
Pick Your Supplier Carefully

Selling top-quality fish at the retail level means insisting on this quality from the supplier.

Suppliers vary in the care used in the handling of fish, so pick one who is quality-minded and maintains high standards.

Arrange For Frequent Deliveries

Frequent deliveries eliminate the necessity of in-store holding of fish. Since quality is easier to maintain on a day-to-day basis, daily delivery is the ideal situation. If daily delivery is not available, schedule deliveries to meet store requirements based on anticipated sales.



Be Sure Of Adequate Refrigeration In Transit

Efforts of suppliers and retailers to maintain a quality product can be destroyed by careless handling during shipment from the point of supply to the retail store. No matter what type of transportation is used—company truck, supplier truck, or commercial carrier—make sure that when fish arrives it was properly packed and adequately refrigerated (below 40°) in transit.

Know Quality Signs

Fresh Fish

- Firm, elastic flesh
- Fresh and mild odor
- Bright, clear and full eyes
- Red, clean gills
- Shiny, bright skin

Frozen Fish

- Solidly frozen flesh—no browning or discoloration
- Little or no odor
- Packages not damaged
- No signs of dried-out flesh

Plan Your Purchases

Order fish for varieties and amounts that will provide good selection for the customer, but avoid a large carry-over beyond the next delivery date.

Avoid speculation and guesswork in the ordering of fish. There is no substitute for adequate records of tonnage as a basis for planned purchasing. Avoid over-stocking of any variety of fish whether fresh or frozen. Storage cannot improve quality.



FRESH FISH

Process Deliveries Immediately

Deliveries of fish should be unpacked from shipping containers immediately on receipt and placed on display or in storage. Delay in getting fish under refrigeration will result in loss of quality.

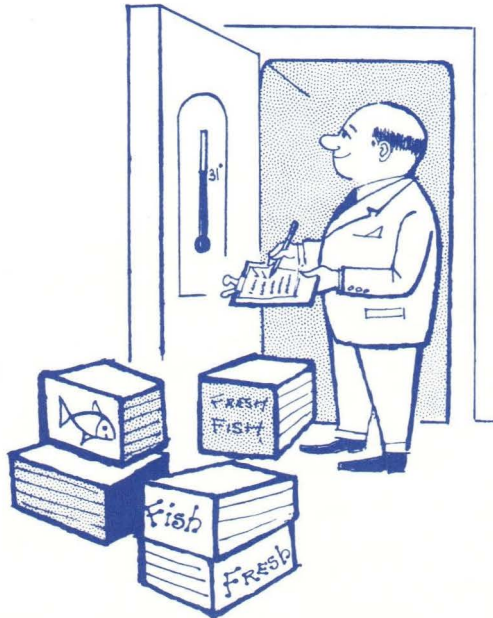
Inspect The Order

Inspection of the order as it is unpacked from shipping containers is a necessary check. It is here that the performance of the distributor and care in transportation can be determined, and it is here that rigid standards of quality control should start. Sub-quality fish should never be allowed to reach the display case. If appearance or odor raises doubts as to quality, reject the order.

Varieties and weights as listed on the invoice should be checked against what is actually received.

Store at 31°F.

The ideal storage temperature for fresh fish is 31°F. The keeping time of fish held at 37°F. can be doubled by reducing the temperature to 31° F., so keep a constant check on display and storage area temperatures.



FROZEN FISH

Receiving and Handling

To prevent thawing, frozen fish should be handled quickly when delivered. Check incoming orders for condition and count. No signs of thawing should be evident, and thawed or partially-thawed products should be rejected.

Storage

Move frozen fish deliveries into low temperature storage (0° F. or below) promptly. Delay in transfer can lower quality. Prior to delivery, arrange space for the new shipment. Store and code mark containers so as to insure rotation of stock. Be sure to check the storage temperature on schedule.

Display of Frozen Fish

Re-stock display cabinets are needed, moving products quickly from storage area to display area. Never build displays above the fill line because quality loss can result from poor storage temperatures above it. Remove old stock before stocking new merchandise, then replace it. Remove torn or damaged packages from display cabinets.

Thawing

Frozen fish which is to be sold in the thawed state should be thawed under refrigeration and not at room temperature. Once frozen fish is thawed, it must not be refrozen and should be sold quickly.

Keep Equipment Clean

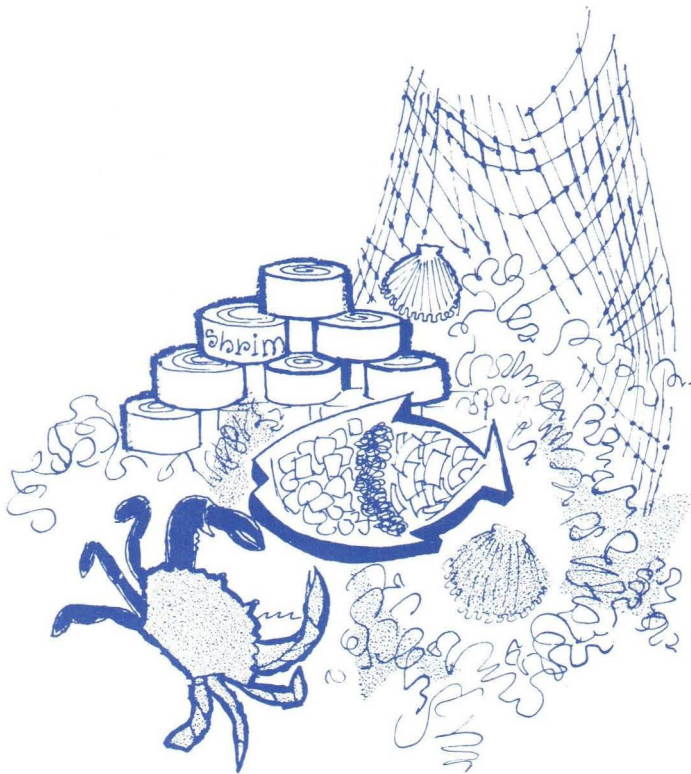
All equipment that comes in contact with fish must be kept scrupulously clean. The spoilage rate of fish increases proportionately to the number of bacteria present on the product. Contamination can result from almost anything; conveyors, storage boxes, coolers, display cases, knives, cutting boards, floors and all other equipment must be cleaned regularly and frequently.



Display for Maximum Appeal

Whether service or self-service, the retail fish department must have eye appeal. Cleanliness and complimentary lighting are basic to effective display.

Ice adds sparkle and appeal to the service fish department. Ice can also be utilized in the self-service department by using trays of ice to



display unpackaged round fish as a sample of the packaged product. It may be displayed directly on the ice or on poly sheet or paper. Garnishes such as greens and slices of lemon can brighten both service and self-service departments. The addition of garnishing, talking signs, and informative labels can add special appeal to the self-service package.

Check Display Case Temperature

In mechanically-refrigerated display cases, either service or self-service, keep the temperature as close to 31° F. as possible. The ideal temperature for display cases using ice alone as a refrigerant is 32° F.

It is seldom possible to maintain an ideal temperature in any type of display equipment for fresh fish, but temperatures should be held as close to the ideal as possible.

In order to keep product temperature as low as possible, displays should not be built too high in either a service or self-service case; although fish at the bottom of the display may be at a satisfactory temperature, the fish at the top may be receiving little benefit from the refrigeration.

The doors of service cases should be kept closed except when a customer is being waited on or the display is being serviced.

Insure Proper Rotation

Visually checking fish quality is difficult because there is no single characteristic, such as color in meat, to indicate deterioration.

Enforce a strict policy of rotation to guarantee first in-first out. Close supervision and training of personnel will insure this practice being followed. In self-service departments, control packaged fish closely to reduce time lag between packaging and displaying.

Police Displays Often

Check the display frequently, whether service or self-service. Remove substandard fish or unappealing packages from the display. Sale of poor-quality products may add to current profit but can lose a customer. A reputation for top quality is worth far more in dollars and cents over an extended period.

Night Care Is Important

If mechanically-refrigerated cases do not maintain the desired temperature (31° F.), remove displays at the end of each business day and place them in a cooler where the right storage temperature is maintained. Self-service fish should be removed from the package before night storage.

Put a layer of ice over fish displayed in ice cases. (Paper laid on top of this ice layer will keep temperatures down and slow the melting rate.) Close display case doors tightly.

Handle Carefully Over The Weekend

Effective ordering should leave a minimum of fish to be carried over the weekend. The remaining fish must be processed carefully. Discard any fish of sub-standard quality. Refreezing of fish that was received frozen and allowed to thaw harms quality. It can be done safely, but the practice should be discouraged. Fish that has never been frozen can be placed in a freezer over the weekend. Store all other fish in a cooler where ideal temperatures are maintained. Remove self-service fish from the package before storage. Inspect all fish again before setting up the display for the next business week



Educate The Customer

Many customers have unfavorable, pre-conceived notions about fish and have a limited knowledge of its uses and methods of prepara-

tion. Informed fish cutters and clerks can do much to stimulate customer acceptance of fish. Recipes and serving suggestions can assist the housewife in planning meals. Related items can also draw attention to the fish department. Advertising can stress economy, variety, nutritive value and appetite appeal. Clear price labeling can aid in winning the confidence of the customer.

Build Special Displays

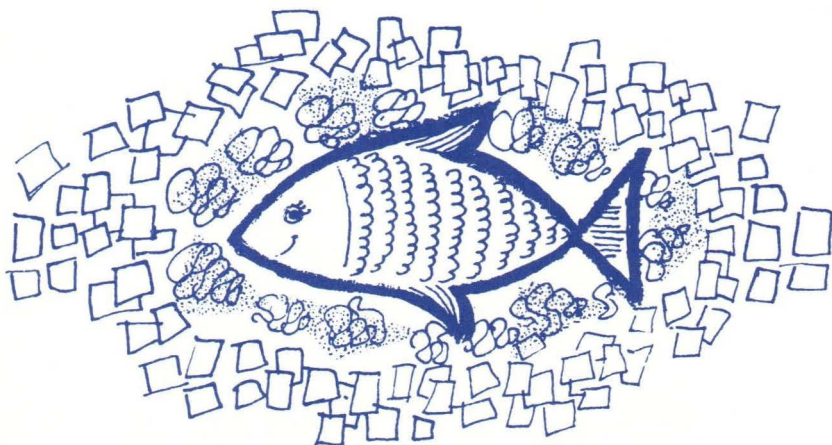
Island displays and ice tables are used successfully to merchandise meat and produce. The same techniques can be applied to fish. A large live lobster, for example, bedded in ice and surrounded by containers of fresh or canned lobster meat can stimulate sales.

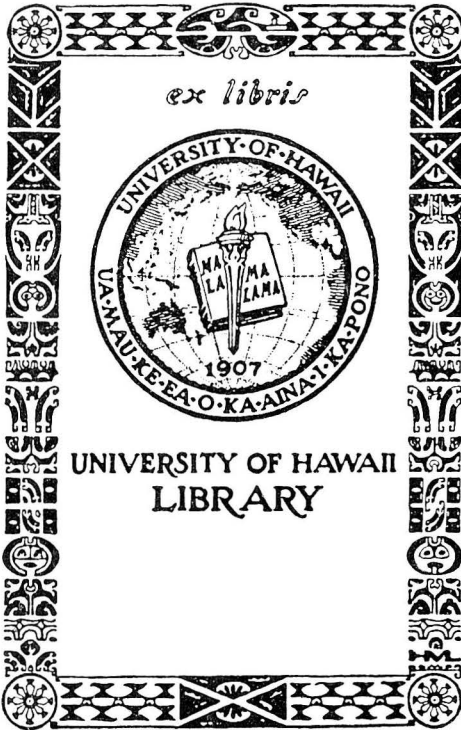
Advertise Fish Specials

Fish is often neglected in advertising. Weekly specials can build fish department volume. Highlight your specials with the proper use of point of purchase advertising.

FOLLOW THROUGH FOR BEST RESULTS . . .

A fish department incorporating the best operating procedures will not run itself. Successful operation depends on effective training of personnel and constant supervision to insure conformance to policy. For best results and increased profits, buy, maintain, and sell only top-quality fish.





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