

Featured Lesson

Lesson 6:5 - Eating Fish

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Chapter 6 of the MinnAqua Leader's Guide - ***Fishing: Get in the Habitat!*** focuses on activities and outcomes that are possible because of the knowledge and skills gained in the first five chapters. **Lesson 6:5 – Eating Fish** is the last lesson in Chapter 6.

There is probably no image that represents Minnesota fishing better than a campfire and a frying pan of fish fillets being prepared for a shore lunch. It's just one of those 'all is right with the world' moments that many of us have experienced or can at least relate too.

After a beautiful day on the water, your new found skills in casting, tackle selection and understanding of fish preference for particular habitat, your reward is a

stringer of sunfish or trout or walleye or catfish. The table is set and the fillets smell incredible. Should you eat them? What about mercury? What about omega-3 fatty acids? What are the risks? What are the benefits?

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Lesson Summary

According to the Minnesota Department of Health, "Most fish are healthy to eat and fish are an excellent source of low-fat protein. Eating fish may also reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes and other chronic illnesses." However, we also know that pollution in lakes, rivers, and streams can accumulate in the flesh of fish. Fish containing pollutants may pose some risk to people, but we can make informed choices about balancing the risks and benefits of eating them. What should you do? The first step is to gather information and assess it to make the best determination of the risks for you and your family. Studies show that the benefits of eating fish outweigh the risks as long as the fish are low in contaminants or you moderate the amount of fish consumed.

The final activity in the lesson involves filleting/dissecting one or more fish. The 'grossology' factor makes this activity of tremendous interest to students. The cooking lesson is a great way to bring the fishing experience full circle...and full tummy too!!

Tips & Tricks

- Part 1 of the lesson can be done with any material that is light and easy to clean up. Popcorn works great, unless you're outside and the grass is wet. Then it's a mess.
- You can really make this lesson personal to the student during Part 2 of the lesson. The [fish consumption advisories](#) developed by the [Minnesota Department of Health](#) are linked to the [DNR Lake Finder](#) so students can acquire real time consumption advisories for their favorite lake(s). It's bound to raise some interesting personal questions and discussions that can



move from the classroom to their own dinner table.

- This lesson will require some lead time on your part to acquire a fish or two for the filleting demonstration. Local fisherman are often most willing to help out. "I gotta go fishing..it's for the kids" might be the best excuse you could hand a volunteer or parent.
- If you can't acquire enough fish for a taste for everyone, you can always get some from a local fish market or grocery. I've found catfish 'nuggets' that are boneless and already cut up into servable pieces available in several stores. (Disclaimer: there is really no such thing as boneless, so tell your students to eat carefully.)
- If filleting is a challenge for you, this is a great time to invite in a guest instructor. Parents, grandparents and local fishing/hunting clubs are great places to seek out filleting volunteers. They might even bring the fish. You can also use the step-by-step instructions and videos found in this issue's [**Fishing Equipment & Tips**](#) article as a guide.

Diving Deeper

Cooking fish with your students can be a very rewarding culminating activity to your fishing program. Check out this newsletter's [**Book Reviews**](#) for cookbook ideas and our [**Fishing Equipment & Tips**](#) article for guidance on how to fillet a fish.

Here are some online recipes:

- BEST Easy Fried Fish Fillet Recipe [**You Tube Video**](#) - 4 min - Aug 11, 2009 - Uploaded by [**HowToExpo**](#) on Aug 11, 2009. Easy Fish Fillet Recipe that can be used with any white fish. [**Print Ingredients**](#) Very easy to prepare and make.
- Take Me Fishing – [**Eating/Cooking Your Fish**](#)

MinnAqua Lesson Connections

This lesson can be a great way to wrap-up a fishing trip with your group. Use [**Lesson 6:1 - Safety and Fishing at the Water's Edge**](#) [**PDF**](#) (37 pages | 3.5 MB) to kick off the day. Next try [**Lesson 6:4 - Piscatorial Palate**](#) [**PDF**](#) (14 pages | 1.1 MB) where the students try out various baits (some traditional, some creative) and gather data on catch rates for the various baits to be analyzed later.

In order for students to be ready to incorporate the objectives of this lesson into their knowledge base, it is good to teach one or two lessons from Chapter 3 Water Stewardship. If you check out the thread for Pollution in the [**Topics Matrix**](#) [**PDF**](#) (3 pages | 182 KB), you'll see that [**Lesson 3:4 - Would You Drink This Water?**](#) [**PDF**](#) (18 pages | 2.0 MB), [**Lesson 3:5 - The Lake Game**](#) [**PDF**](#) (25 pages | 2.3 MB), and [**Lesson 3:6 - Macroinvertebrate Mayhem**](#) [**PDF**](#) (23 pages | 2.3 MB) will all help your students build base-line knowledge of how pollution/contaminants get into the aquatic environment and how they can help to reduce those contaminants.

NEW: Suggested Online Student Resources

Have your students access these online resources to engage in these concepts further.

[**US EPA Eating Fish Kids Pages**](#)

[**MN DNR Kids Fishing Page**](#)