Alldredge-Int. 5070

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES. OWI-1915
For Immediate Release, May 30, 1943. W

With the wealth of the sea to choose from, America makes good use of only a dozen kinds of fish and shellfish and neglects scores of seafoods that could add point-free proteins to the Nation's market basket, Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes said today.

Commercial fishermen take about 160 species, ranging from alewives to yellowtail, from the two oceans and the lakes and rivers of the United States. Of the 160, not more than 25 are caught in any great quantity, the Fisheries Coordinator pointed out. A dozen species make up about four-fifths of the total fishery yield, and the catch of the three leading species, pilchards, menhaden, and salmon, is as large as the combined take of all other species.

Of the 12 species that make up 80 per cent of the catch, the Pacific coast contributes most or all of the following: pilchard or California sardine, salmon, tuna, mackerel, and sea herring; the Atlantic coast supplies most or all of the take of menhaden, shrimp, oysters, haddock, rosefish, crabs, cod, and flounders.

On the list of little utilized species are many fishes that could be caught in greater quantity and so supply a considerable poundage of needed food. Many of these have been discarded by fishermen in the past for want of market demand. Conservative in its eating habits, the public tends to ask for only the staple and well-known kinds of fish and shellfish.

Inland fish in particular could be used more widely, according to Coordinator Ickes. The neglected carp is so abundant throughout the middle west that sportsmen consider it a nuisance. Properly prepared, it is an excellent food, considered a delicacy by Europeans. The related buffalo fishes are also available in quantity as are the sweet-meated, though bony suckers. The burbot, a wholesome food fish closely related to the familiar cod, is present in some quantity in the Great Lakes. Sheepshead, bowfin, and gar represent virtually untapped food resources easily available to the interior of the country.

The Mississippi River and the Great Lakes ordinarily furnish only about four percent of the Nation's fish. Although species like the prized whitefish and lake trout are now being fished to capacity, the less familiar kinds could furnish many millions of pounds of food.

Among ocean species, skates, sharks, anglerfish, puffers, sea robins, mussels, and squids probably will be seen in the markets more often. Ocean-going trawlers bring up numbers of such fish in their nets when they fish for haddock, cod,

(over)

flounders, and other staple varieties. In the past, the crews tossed them overboard because of the lack of a profitable market. Now the public, faced with a meat shortage and scarcity of familiar fishes, is more willing to try the new species seen in seafood markets.

Skates, long popular in Europe, have been little used here. A skate is a much flattened fish with broad, winglike flaps along the sides of the body. The "wings" are the edible portions from which a white meat, excellent as a salad or casserole dish, is taken.

Shark steaks, chiefly from Pacific coast sharks, appeared in a number of markets last winter. Great quantities of sharks have been taken for their livers, which are rich in vitamins, but for the most part the flesh has been wasted. Kippered or lightly smoked shark resembles smoked salmon; fresh steaks are sometimes compared to halibut. The principal differences between sharks and such true fishes as cod or salmon, zoologists explain, is that the skeleton of sharks is not calcified.

The angler is a large marine fish which gets its name from its habit of fishing for its own food. A curious outgrowth from its forehead, like a rod and line, seems to attract small fishes within easy reach. Sometimes the angler is smoked whole, making it look and taste something like a smoked ham. It is also marketed fresh in the form of steaks, a whole angler being too large for the housewife to take home for dinner.

Fishermen off Long Island are now bringing in fair quantities of puffers from their traps. Puffers inflate like small balloons when touched or otherwise disturbed, but deflate docilely after capture. Puffer enthusiasts compare the choice morsel of white meat to the best fried chicken.

The once neglected sea mussel is now enjoying some popularity on the Atlantic coast. The coasts of Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island are lined with extensive mussel beds between the tide lines and in somewhat deeper water. Mussels are closely related to oysters and clams but because of their thinner shells yield proportionately more meat. Unlike Americans, Europeans have exploited their mussel beds for many years. Several New England firms are now preparing to can mussels for shipment to our allies.

Still more or less in the field of marine curiosities as far as the general public is concerned are squids, periwinkles, conches, and sea urchins. However, Americans of recent European or Asiatic origin regard these creatures as delicacies. Squids, periwinkles, and conches are related to oysters and clams, while sea urchins belong to the same general group as the familiar star fish.

Squids are now relatively high priced items. Gourmets recommend that they be skinned, dressed (they contain only a small amount of inedible matter), gently stewed, and served with tomato sauce. Baskets of periwinkles and conches are to be seen in New York's famous Fulton Fish Market and other seafood centers. Sea urchins, somewhat resembling chestnut burrs, are also appearing in some markets. The only edible portion is the orange-colored roe, found by breaking open the shell.