



Monchong

sickle pomfret
(*Taractichthys steindachneri*)



Monchong is the name used in Hawaii for two species of **deep sea pomfret**. These are harvested in small quantities by the tuna longline and bottomfish handline fisheries. The predominant species is *Taractichthys steindachneri*, known as the **sickle pomfret**, because of the forked shape of its fins and large scales. The large black scales covering the entire body of this species distinguish it from *Eumegistus illustris*, or **lustrous pomfret**, which has bronze skin color, larger eyes, and a thicker body. The lustrous pomfret accounts for less than 5% of *monchong* landings in Hawaii.

Seasonality & How They Are Caught

Availability and Seasonality:

Only small quantities of *monchong* are available because it is not usually targeted by fishermen. There are no well-defined seasonal trends in availability. *Monchong* can range from about 4 pounds to over 25 pounds, but the prime market sizes are fish over 12 pounds.

Distribution:

Monchong are landed and marketed fresh. Most of the catch is sold at the Honolulu fish auction to wholesalers. Restaurants are the primary customers for *monchong* in Hawaii and the rest of the U.S.A. Like sev-

eral other species harvested in Hawaii's ocean fisheries, *monchong* has gained an identity as an exotic fish which can add variety to restaurant menus.

Fishing Methods:

Most *monchong* are harvested along with tuna and other associated species by tuna longliners at greater than 900 ft depth. Fishermen using handlines for bottomfish also catch *monchong* at great depths (over 1,200 feet), but it is not a primary target species. The lustrous pomfret has been caught on seabed slopes over 1500 ft deep.

Quality

Monchong has an excellent shelf life as a fresh product, lasting up to 3 weeks after capture with proper handling. Fish are landed and iced whole until final processing. It is not uncommon for parasites to occur in *monchong*. Simple trimming can correct this problem.

Product Forms and Yields:

Most *monchong* is sold to restaurants as skinless fillets. The large, hard scales make skinning the only practical product form. The yield of skinless fillet from the whole weight is about 45%. Thick rib bones which cover a large portion of the belly flap are trimmed off fillets. Small *monchong* are sold whole or gutted, as are some larger fish.

Color, Taste, Texture:

Monchong has clear, white flesh with pinkish tones. When cooked, it turns white. It is firm in texture and moderate in flavor. The highly transparent flesh, high oil content and good shelf life makes this versatile fish very attractive for restaurant use.

Preparations:

Because of its high oil content, *monchong* is well suited for grilling but it can also be broiled, sautéed, or baked. *Monchong* has been well received as a white-flesh sashimi, but is rarely used in raw fish dishes in Hawaii.



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