

SEAFOOD PRIMER

The pedestrian moniker “flatfish” belies this marine order’s delicate fillets and divine flavor.

Native to U.S. and European coasts, these bottom dwellers—including halibut, flounder, and sole—have a distinctive appearance. As small fry, they resemble most other fish. But as they age into adulthood, one eye migrates to join its mate on the other side, and their bodies flatten. This allows them to burrow into shallow sand and watch for prey and



Southern Fried Flounder with Basil-Caper Tartar Sauce

winter flounder, sand dab, witch flounder (which Steve calls “the Cadillac of flounders with the most delicate flavor”), English sole, fluke, plaice, and widely sold yellowtail flounder (aka yellowtail dab or rusty flounder).

No matter the type, mild-flavored flounder offers great versatility when it comes to cooking. Try it baked, broiled, steamed, poached, sautéed, or even lightly fried. It marries well with a wide range of sauces, including classic lemon butter, aioli, hollandaise, Creole-style sauces, and simple tomato- or fruit-based salsas. Markets mostly sell flounder as fillets, but they will usually provide whole fish to those who order it ahead.

SOLE

Though several flounder family members have been mislabeled as sole in the United States, no actual sole inhabits American coastal waters. True sole lives on the other side of the Atlantic, from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, with the best known being Dover sole. Most real sole purchased here arrives frozen, which does not do justice to this fish’s delicate texture. A better—albeit pricier—method for enjoying an unadulterated fillet of sole would be to book a flight to a favorite European dining spot.

FLOUNDER

An amazing variety of fish hail from the flounder clan:

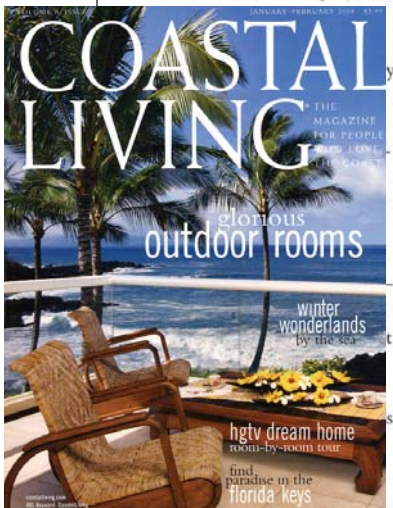
the skinny on flatfish

Mild flavor and fine texture make halibut, flounder, and sole some of the most versatile fish in the sea.

easier to visit a fishmonger.

Halibut features firm, white, mild-flavored flesh. As an extra benefit for the health-conscious, it’s very low in fat. Of the two main varieties, Atlantic halibut is fished mostly from north Atlantic waters off the New England coast. The more abundant Pacific halibut dwells from Northern California to the Bering Sea, though the bulk

of commercial fishing occurs in Alaska and British Columbia. Sold fresh or frozen, both types usually appear as steaks; fillets are a second choice. Die-hard devotees enjoy halibut cheeks (small delicacies from inside the cheek) sautéed, or smoked and used as cocktail appetizers.



Look for bright skin colors, a clarity and opaqueness.”

HALIBUT

Its Latin name (*Hippoglossus*) conveys the halibut’s size, with some catches weighing in at nearly half a ton. Not many folks want to go after one with a rod and reel. It’s

BY JOHN SHIELDS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOWARD L. PUCKETT
FOOD STYLING BY KATHLEEN ROYAL PHILLIPS

100 COASTAL LIVING

- 3/4 cup water
- 1 fish bouillon cube
- 1 large tomato, seeded and chopped
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 6 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 4 (6-ounce) halibut fillets
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup frozen sweet peas, thawed

- 1/2 pound fresh lump crabmeat
- 1/2 pound cooked shrimp, peeled, deveined, and chopped
- 1/4 pound broiled scallops, diced
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon seafood seasoning
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 2 lemons
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 6 (6-ounce) sole or flounder fillets
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 jalapeño or serrano chile, chopped
- 3 tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 1/3 cup fresh orange juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Garnish: chopped fresh parsley
- Hot cooked jasmine rice
- Lime wedges

Place flounder fillets in a shallow dish. Sprinkle evenly with lime juice, 1/2 teaspoon