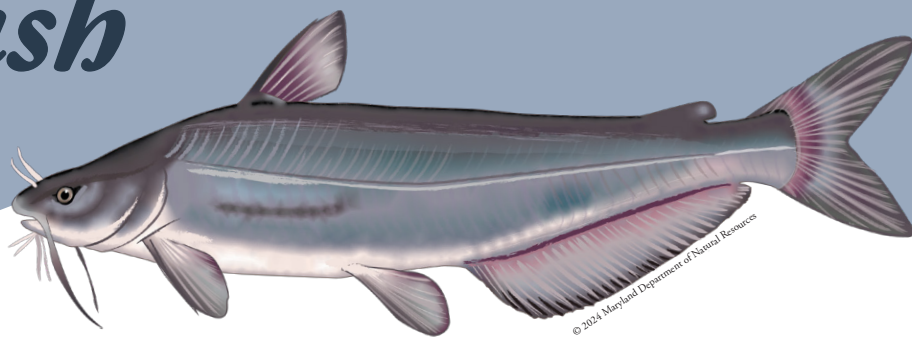


# Chesapeake Blue Catfish

**Wild, Delicious,  
and Nutritious!**



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## WHAT IS CHESAPEAKE BLUE CATFISH?

Chesapeake blue catfish is a wild-caught, nonnative fish in the Chesapeake Bay. Blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*) were introduced to Virginia's James and Rappahannock rivers in the 1970s for recreational fishing. They have since spread throughout the Bay's major rivers. Blue catfish are considered an invasive fish in the Chesapeake Bay because they spread quickly, are abundant, and prey on many valuable commercial and recreational species.<sup>1</sup> Though this fish is invasive, it is delicious and nutritious. If you catch a catfish, you will know it is a blue catfish if it is smooth-skinned with a slate blue body, has a forked tail, and has a long, straight-margined fin behind its stomach.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW CAN WE REDUCE BLUE CATFISH IN MARYLAND WATERS?

Increased harvesting and marketing efforts are underway to lower blue catfish numbers in Chesapeake Bay rivers. The commercial fishery harvests millions of pounds of blue catfish each year. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) started a Certified Local Farm & Fish Program (CLFF) to generate sales of blue catfish to state institutions providing food services.<sup>2</sup> In 2025, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced \$6 million in grants to help seafood processors expand capacity for invasive, wild-caught catfish.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, MDA awarded \$1.9 million to food banks for the purchase of wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish filets.<sup>4</sup>

## HOW DOES CHESAPEAKE BLUE CATFISH TASTE?

This fish is mild, clean-tasting, and flaky, like striped bass. Unlike farmed catfish, which are fed a diet of corn and soy feed, Chesapeake blue catfish feed on a variety of fish and shellfish, including menhaden, American shad, rockfish, yellow perch, American eel, spot, river herring, blue crabs, clams, and mussels.<sup>1</sup>



## IS IT NUTRITIOUS AND SAFE TO EAT?

Chesapeake blue catfish filets are high in protein and low in fat and cholesterol, with more healthy fats (75% unsaturated) than unhealthy fats (25% saturated). Most importantly, they provide an abundance of healthy omega-3 fatty acids (270 mg per serving).<sup>1</sup>

Filets from commercial suppliers are routinely inspected by the USDA. Like other fish, blue catfish can accumulate toxins. If catching your own fish, consider the water quality in the areas you fish and check the Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE) [fish consumption advisories](#). MDE also recommends gutting all fish and removing the belly flap, skin, and dark meat before eating.

Chemical contaminant levels, such as mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), increase with fish size. Research shows mercury levels from Chesapeake blue catfish measuring 15–36 inches are below the FDA/EPA safety threshold of 1 ppm.<sup>5,6</sup> Even in fish up to 41 inches, concentrations of PCBs in filets remained below the 2 ppm safety limit.<sup>6,7</sup>

## WHERE CAN YOU BUY OR EAT CHESAPEAKE BLUE CATFISH?

This fish is available at many local seafood markets and regional grocery stores. If you do not see it at the seafood counter, just ask. Many stores can source it upon request! [Maryland's Best](#) has also compiled a list of blue catfish recipes, retail locations, and restaurants serving wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish.<sup>8, 9, 10</sup>

### Nutrition Facts

varied servings per container  
Serving size 4 oz (112g)

Amount per serving

**Calories 90**

% Daily Value\*

Total Fat 1.5g 2%

Saturated Fat 0g 0%

Trans Fat 0g

Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g

Monounsaturated Fat 0g

Cholesterol 60mg 20%

Sodium 55mg 2%

Total Carbohydrate 0g 0%

Dietary Fiber 0g 0%

Total Sugars 0g

Includes 0g Added Sugars 0%

Protein 19g

Vitamin D 1.7mcg 8%

Calcium 10mg 0%

Iron 0mg 0%

Potassium 460mg 10%

\*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

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Smoked Blue Catfish Dip (top) and Curried Catfish. Photos, courtesy of Maryland Department of Agriculture



Blue catfish caught in the Potomac River. Photo, Madeleine Jepsen/Maryland Sea Grant



Catfish Cake (top). Photo, Madeleine Jepsen/Maryland Sea Grant; Blue Catfish Tacos. Photo, Logan Bilbrough/University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension



For more information or assistance with Chesapeake blue catfish processing and safety, please contact:  
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