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Shrimp – An Important Seafood Product in Florida

Florida is known as the fishing capital of the world. As important as fishing is in Florida, the variety of seafood offered to consumers in Florida is equally as important. According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida produces over 80 varieties of both wild-caught and farm-raised seafood products across the state in the Gulf and Atlantic, in both state and federal waters. Florida also is ranked among the top twelve states for fresh seafood production. With over 1,300 miles of coastline, Florida has a vast area where seafood can be harvested and brought back to port to be processed and sold.

One of the top seafood products both in the United States and Florida is shrimp. As in most years, shrimp was the top seafood product consumed in the United States, with 3.6 pounds of shrimp consumed per person in 2013. There are five species of shrimp harvested in Florida: brown shrimp, white shrimp, pink or hopper shrimp, royal red shrimp, and rock shrimp. In addition, reported commercial penaeid (i.e., brown, pink, and white) shrimp landings totaled over 10 million pounds in Florida in 2013.

Shrimp are generally known as an “annual crop” because they have a short life span (usually less than two years), and their population fluctuates every year based on spawning success, environmental conditions, weather, etc. United States wild-caught shrimp are a smart seafood choice because they are sustainably managed and are responsibly harvested under U.S. federal and state regulations. Most shrimp are flash frozen on board the fishing vessel before being brought to port for unloading and processing. This locks in the freshness, quality, and taste of the shrimp.

Brown Shrimp



Brown shrimp have a firm and very “shrimpy”, robust flavor to them. They are available year-round, with peaks in the summer, and can be purchased either fresh or frozen. They are caught offshore from North Carolina to Texas. Approximately 95 percent of the brown shrimp harvested in the U.S. from 2003 to 2012 came from the Gulf of Mexico, mainly from Texas and Louisiana. But they are also harvested here in Florida. In 2013, the greatest landings were reported in the Florida Panhandle (northwest FL) and in Lee County (southwest FL) on the Gulf coast, and in Nassau, Duval, St. Johns, (northeast FL) and Brevard (east central FL) counties on the Atlantic Coast.

Brown shrimp live in shallow water, usually less than 180 feet deep, but can be found in water up to 360 feet deep. As they grow, they migrate to deeper, more salty waters.

Shrimp in Florida

White Shrimp



White shrimp have a firm and mild flavor. They are available year round, with peaks in the fall. They are caught offshore from North Carolina to Texas. Approximately 90 percent of the white shrimp is harvested in the Gulf of Mexico, mainly from Louisiana and Texas. In 2013, the greatest landings in Florida were reported mostly in Nassau, Duval, St. Johns, Volusia, Brevard, and Miami-Dade (southeast FL) counties on the Atlantic coast, and Franklin, Gulf, and Wakulla counties in the panhandle region of the Gulf coast. White shrimp are very sensitive to cold, and harvests of white shrimp are much lower in years following severe winter weather.

Because the population can be periodically decimated by severe winter cold in the South Atlantic, especially offshore of Georgia and South Carolina, the fishery may be closed to help protect the remaining adult population so they can spawn. White shrimp are commonly found in estuaries and coastal areas out to about 100 feet offshore.

Pink or Hopper Shrimp



Pink shrimp (also called Hoppers) have a firm and slightly sweet flavor. They are available year round, with peaks in the winter. They are caught offshore from North Carolina to Texas, but are mainly from Florida. Approximately 80 percent of the pink shrimp harvested in the U.S. comes from the west coast of Florida. Most shrimp harvested in Florida are pink shrimp. In 2013, the greatest landings in Florida were reported mostly in Gulf, Franklin (panhandle), Pinellas, Hillsborough (west central FL), Lee, and Monroe (southwest FL) counties in the Gulf coast and Nassau, Duval, and Miami-Dade counties on the Atlantic coast. Annual harvests vary from year

to year, primarily due to environmental facts. Harvests are much lower in years following severe winter weather. Pink shrimp are commonly found on sand, sand-shell, or coral-mud substrates.

Rock Shrimp



Rock shrimp have a firm and sweet flavor, similar to the taste of a lobster. Rock shrimp get their name from their very hard shell. Harvest of rock shrimp is seasonal, with peaks from July through October. They are caught offshore from North Carolina to Texas but are mainly from Florida. In 2013, rock shrimp landings in Florida totaled over 1 million pounds. Gulf coast landings accounted for 30 percent of statewide landings and came from Franklin, Gulf, Bay, Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Lee counties. On the Atlantic coast, landings were from Brevard, Duval, and Nassau counties. Almost all of the harvest of rock shrimp is sold as meat because the shrimp is difficult to

peel due to its very hard shell. Rodney Thompson, who founded Wild Ocean Seafood Market and Dixie Crossroads, developed a machine that could easily split and butterfly rock shrimp, and thus a market for the shrimp was developed. Rock shrimp mainly live on sandy substrates in water 80 to 215 feet deep, but can be found in depths to 600 feet.

Shrimp in Florida

Royal Red Shrimp



Royal red shrimp have a very tender and salty/sweet flavor. Availability varies year round, with peaks in early spring through June. They are less abundant than browns, whites, and pinks, and are also caught in much deeper water than any of the Florida's other commercial shrimp species, generally between 600 and 2,000 feet deep. Shrimp boats have to travel for weeks at a time, far offshore, to harvest this species. A boat must be large enough to be able to make this journey for an extended period of time. Shrimpers generally only target this species when other species of shrimp are not available at the time and location to be harvested. Due to the increased cost and time in harvesting this species, only a small fleet of boats participates in the fishery. Peak harvest occurs in late summer and fall.

Additional Information

Deep Sea Trawl Fisheries of the Southeast US and Gulf of Mexico: Rock Shrimp, Royal Red Shrimp, Calico Scallops

http://coralreef.noaa.gov/education/educators/resourcecd/background/resources/rawl_report_bm.pdf

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) – Seafood

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Marketing-and-Development/Consumer-Resources/Buy-Fresh-From-Florida/Seafood-Products>

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) – Shrimp

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Marketing-and-Development/Consumer-Resources/Buy-Fresh-From-Florida/Seafood-Products/Shrimp>

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI)

<http://myfwc.com/research/saltwater/crustaceans/shrimp>

<http://myfwc.com/media/195867/penaeid-shrimps.pdf>

<http://myfwc.com/media/195873/rock-shrimp.pdf>

Florida Sea Grant – Florida's Commercial Shrimp Species

<http://flseagrant.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter/2014/03/floridas-commercial-shrimp-species>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) FishWatch - U.S. Seafood Facts

<http://www.fishwatch.gov>

<http://www.fishwatch.gov/profiles/brown-shrimp>

NOAA Fisheries

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center

<http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/species/shrimp>

Shrimp in Florida

Seafood Health Facts: Making Smart Choices

http://seafoodhealthfacts.org/seafood_choices/overview.php

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council – Shrimp

<http://safmc.net/resource-library/shrimp>

<http://safmc.net/fishidandregs/fishgallery/rockshrimp>

Wild Ocean Seafood Market

<http://wildoceanmarket.com>