

Best Practices for High Quality Seafood

Higher Quality —→ Higher Yield When Processed —→ More Value for Everyone

Processors do pay different prices for different quality levels and they care a *lot* about yield, shelf life, and consistency in quality.

- Good quality means **higher yield, longer shelf life**, and gives **more flexibility** to processors to find the best market opportunities.
- **Consistency and reliability in quality** allows processors to convince customers to prioritize and pay well for local fish. If they can't count on quality being consistent, there's no chance of increasing value.

4 Keys to Quality: Time, Temperature, Handling, and Sanitation

- Chill to **<40 degrees (F)** as **quickly** as possible
- Handle with care (treat fish like you would fresh fruit)
- Keep it clean - dirty surfaces mean bacteria, which means quality degrades faster. Clean totes, vats, surfaces, holds, and **especially knives** for cutting fish.

More Opportunities to Boost Quality:

- Minimize how many times a fish is handled
- Avoid stepping on, gaffing, tossing fish (again, **think fresh fruit**)
- Replace wooden surfaces with aluminum or steel (wood is harder to clean and holds bacteria)
- Use the smallest tote or vat that allows the fish to lay flat and **carefully pack** to avoid crushing and bruising
- Shorter soak or tow times

Ice Advice:

- Use enough ice (**more than you think**) in the shoulder seasons to chill to <40 degrees
- Layer ice (top, middle, bottom) in totes/vats
- Insulate your hold if possible
- **Slurry ice can improve quality** if done right (don't let fish sit in water)
- Flake ice and slurry are best for quality purposes (fastest to chill fish, least bruising/crushing) - but high quality can be achieved with crushed/cracked ice if handled well to avoid bruising



This information is based on research done by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, Maine Coast Fishermen's Association, and processors and fishermen from across New England. For more information, scan the QR code for a **video on best practices** and to learn more about this project, visit **gmri.org/quality**.