

Onaga

longtail red snapper (*Etelis coruscans*)



Longtail Red Snapper

is one of Hawaii's fish better known as **onaga** (derived locally from one of its Japanese names *onagadai*), than by its Hawaiian name, *ula`ula*. It is also called ruby snapper in other parts of the country. Most of the *onaga* caught off the Hawaiian Islands range in size from 1 to 18 pounds. *Onaga* caught in the South Pacific are often larger.

Seasonality & How They Are Caught

Availability and Seasonality:

Onaga is Hawaii's second most important bottomfish after *opakapaka* in terms of total landed weight and value. Although *onaga* is harvested mainly during the fall and winter months (October-March), its availability peaks during the month of December when the traditional de-

mand (and prices) for red-colored snappers among Hawaii's Japanese population is at its peak.

Fishing Methods:

Onaga is harvested exclusively with vertical hook-and-line gear. This bottomfish is caught in deep waters (600-1000 ft), near around outcroppings along rocky bottoms. The bottomfish fishery is basically divided into the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) and the main Hawaiian islands. The fisheries are undergoing change. The establishment of the National Monument in the NWHI has set in motion the phasing out of the sustainable, NWHI limited-entry bottomfish fishery. The main Hawaiian Islands fishery remains under intensive management with an annual commercial catch limit. The restrictions on the NWHI fishery greatly reduce the

supply of this important fish.

Distribution:

Onaga caught off the main Hawaiian Islands is sold at the Honolulu fish auction, through intermediary buyers on the major islands, and directly to retail fish markets and restaurants. The NWHI catch is sold primarily through the Honolulu fish auction.

Quality

Onaga does not keep as long as *opakapaka*, but if well handled, it has a shelf life of about 10 days. *Onaga* caught off the main Hawaiian Islands are marketed within a few days, whereas the fish taken in Northwestern Hawaiian Islands in some cases may not reach the market for 7-8 days.

Product Forms and Yields:

All of the *onaga* catch is landed as whole, iced fish. *Onaga* is filleted to supply a growing demand for Hawaii-caught snappers in up-scale restaurants. The average yield of fillet from a whole fish is about 45%. However, restaurant buyers often request whole fish for display and to prolong the shelf life of their *onaga* purchases.

Color, Taste, Texture:

Onaga has clear, light pink flesh similar to that of the *opakapaka* but

somewhat softer and moister. Fish caught during the winter months tend to have a higher fat content than those caught in the summer; hence *onaga* yield the best *sashimi* during the winter season.

Preparations

Onaga has a delicate flavor which is enjoyed when served raw (*sashimi* style) or when baked, steamed, or prepared in a host of other ways.

Hawaii's residents have a strong

culturally-oriented demand for red snappers for ceremonial occasions such as the New Year's season and weddings, when *onaga sashimi* is traditionally served. The ornate preparation of *onaga sashimi* displayed with the body with its bright red skin color and long tail make a striking and beautiful center piece.



Hawaii Seafood Council

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