

Kajiki

blue marlin (*Makaira nigricans*)



Blue marlin is commonly known as **kajiki** or *a'u*, the Hawaiian name applied to all marlin species caught in Hawaii. This species can get as large as 1,600 pounds in round weight, but the usual size of fish marketed is between 80 and 300 pounds. The *kajiki* is distinguished from other commonly-caught marlin species by its larger size, heavier bill, and rougher, grey skin. It lacks the obvious stripes of the *nairagi*.

Seasonality & How They Are Caught

Availability and Seasonality:

The heaviest landings of *kajiki* are during the summer and fall (June-October), the period when schooling tunas, the favorite prey of *kajiki*, are often abundant in the waters off Hawaii.

Fishing Methods:

A favorite target of sport fishermen, *kajiki* are also caught commercially by longline vessels and by trolling from smaller boats.

The bulk of the sport catch comes from the charter fishing fleets operating from Kona and Oahu. The Kona coast is a world famous location for marlin fishing. Trolling usually produces the larger fish, whereas longlining often harvests fish with higher fat content from deeper waters.

Distribution:

In Hawaii, charter fishing boats are allowed to sell their catch. But not all charter captains sell their *kajiki* catch. Today, many fish are tagged and released alive. The portion of the catch by charter boats that is sold may go directly to retailers,

wholesalers, processors, or restaurants, or may be marketed through the Honolulu fish auction or intermediaries. Virtually all of the longline catch and much of the commercial troll catch of *kajiki* off the island of Oahu is marketed fresh through the Honolulu fish auction.

Quality

Although some longline boats that catch *kajiki* are at sea for up to 10-12 days, the quality of the fish is often better than one-or two-day old fish from local trollers. Poorly-handled fish may have gaping (separated) and/or opaque (burnt) flesh that is a dull beige color. The texture is mushy, and the flesh falls apart easily.

In *kajiki* of over 150 pounds, there is considerable connective tissue be-

tween layers of muscle. This tissue is tough and stringy, and its presence is one of the reasons why fish dealers and consumers prefer smaller *kajiki*.

Product Forms and Yields:

Kajiki is marketed in many forms. *Kajiki* with high fat content may be served as *sashimi* and is prized for making poke. Other good quality fresh fish may be filleted or loined for restaurants to serve as “catch of the day” or for sale in fish markets.

Dressed, chunked, or loined marlin may be shipped to mainland markets (although not to California which prohibits the sale of marlins, except black marlin, from any source). Up to 65% of whole fish weight can be recovered as fillet. Large fish that are less suitable for the fresh market, may be smoked or processed into other forms such as fish burgers.

Color, Taste, Texture:

Kajiki has firm flesh with a mild flavor (although somewhat more pronounced than the flavor of *ahi*). Flesh color in *kajiki* is pale pink, although it varies somewhat from fish to fish. When cooked, *kajiki* is white. Flesh with high fat content has a naturally lacquered appearance.

Preparations

Marlin is ideal for grilling, but other cooking methods will work as well. *Kajiki* is also used for raw fish preparations including sashimi, poke and ceviche. In Hawaii smoked marlin is a favorite and Japanese-style fish cakes are sometimes made from marlin.

Historical Note

Like all of the large billfish (*a`u*) caught by the ancient Hawaiians, the *kajiki* was feared because it could pierce a fishing canoe with its heavy bill.



Hawaii Seafood Council

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