



## LIONFISH INFORMATION FOR CONSUMERS



### **Q: Are lionfish good for me?**

A: Lionfish are healthy for you to eat! They are high in Omega 3s, low in saturated fat, and low in mercury levels.

### **Q: Are lionfish high quality?**

A: Lionfish aren't just good for you, they taste great too! They are a flakey, white fish and taste like red porgy, or a combination of grouper and mahi-mahi. They are not “fishy” and have a firm texture.

### **Q: Why should I eat lionfish?**

A: Aside from the taste and health benefits, eating lionfish will help support local fishermen and the local economy. Lionfish are also invasive to USVI and are an aggressive, top-predator fish that can reduce the population of other valuable reef fish by about 80% in just 5 weeks!

### **Q: How should I eat lionfish?**

A: You can buy it at a restaurant, or buy it to cook at home. The fish should be prepared as any other reef species. If you buy a whole fish, be careful with the spines since they are venomous and can sting. The fish can be cooked whole with the spines attached since the venom will be neutralized by the heat of cooking.

### **Q: How do I fillet a lionfish?**

A: Filleting a lionfish is like filleting any other fish, you just need to watch out not to poke yourself! Experienced lionfish handlers can fillet the fish with the spines still attached. Beginners should use scissors to cut off the spines first.

### **Q: Where can I buy lionfish?**

A: Look for the orange and white “Eat the Enemy” logo. Ask your local commercial fisherman for lionfish. Many are willing to catch them for you instead of other reef fish! Ask for lionfish at restaurants—many are interested in selling it!

### **Q: How much do lionfish generally cost?**

A: You can expect the price of lionfish to be similar to that of other fresh, high quality reef fish. The premium for fillets may be higher than for other reef fish due to the added time and effort needed to remove the spines.





## Q: Is Lionfish Safe to Eat?

A: You are no more likely to get sick from lionfish than you are from another species that eats other fish, like grouper!

It is always good to question the safety of any new food selection, including lionfish. Lionfish that is sold by grocery stores, restaurants, and trusted fishermen (who know the healthy reefs) are just as safe as any other fish you eat from our beautiful waters! But, because lionfish are predators (like grouper) and live near tropical reefs, there is an additional concern for natural toxins.

*Ciguatera fish poisoning (CFP)* causes people to get sick when they eat fish that has eaten a certain type of natural toxin, or by eating other fish that are infected. Since the cause relates to contaminated waters, it's not specific to any one kind of fish. When someone gets sick from ciguatera, it's because of where the fish was caught, not what kind of fish it is.

### MORE ON CFP:

“Lionfish may contain ciguatoxins... The ciguatoxins are not caused by contamination... The ciguatoxins are acquired from the food eaten by the lionfish. Ciguatoxins are produced in certain waters that favor growth of a particular kind of plankton... these plankton introduce the potential toxins that can be transmitted through the local food chain, eventually accumulating in some top-order predator fish. The toxins can be concentrated to potentially harmful levels that will persist in the edible portions of the fish and cannot be reduced or eliminated by cooking... The resulting illness is known as ciguatera fish poisoning, or CFP. CFP is distinguished primarily by symptoms that can begin to occur within 6 hours after consumption.” [p. 1-2, Otwell 2015]

If you suspect CFP, please seek medical care.

Otwell, S. 2015. *Lionfish: Is it Safe to Eat?* UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Gainesville. Available at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.



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