



FISH IV. FISH AS FOOD

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Although fish is the main source of animal protein along the northern and southern coasts of Persia, it is not much eaten in the rest of the country and then mainly in smoked form (*māhī-e dūdī*) as a delicacy traditionally served with rice and fresh herbs (*sabzī polow*) on the first day of the new year at the end of the zodiacal month of Pisces (*Ḥūt*).

The Persian Gulf coast and the southern shores of the Caspian Sea are characterized by sharply differing climates and cultures. In the south the fish used in cooking belong to saltwater species: grouper (*hamūr*), croaker (*māhī-e šūrīda*), sole (*māhī-e ḥalwā*), red snapper (*māhī-e sorkū*), grunt (*māhī-e sangsar*), flounder (*kaf-e dast māhī*), and mackerel (*šīr māhī*). Influences from India using curry powder and tamarind, combined with local ingredients including fresh herbs, fenugreek, and garlic, lend a distinctive character to these southern fish dishes.

In Gilān and Māzandarān on the Caspian coast a popular dish is *šūr-māhī* (salty fish), heavily salted fish steamed on a bed of smothered rice (*kata*). Although the residents of these areas eat all kinds of fish, the most popular are species of sturgeon (*ozūn borūn*), trout (*qezel ālā*), striped bass (*māhī-e safīd*), salmon (*māhī-e āzād*), shad (*kopūr*). All parts of the fish, from the roe and intestines to the head, are used in cooking. Particularly popular in



Māzandarān is a large, stuffed whitefish, similar to striped bass, baked and served with herbed rice; the stuffing usually consists of garlic, parsley, tarragon, scallions, coriander, mint, ground walnuts, barberries, raisins, lime juice, and salt and pepper, all sautéed in butter or oil.

See also [CAVIAR](#).

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