

ANCHOVIES

- **Class:** Osteichthyes: Boney Fishes
- **Order:** Clupeiformes (Herring, Sardines, Pilchards)
- **Family:** Engraulis / Engraulidae



Anchovies

"Anchovy" is the name of more than 100 species of the Engraulidae family. They are small, weak, silvery fish that resemble miniature herrings. Anchovies have a long snout that projects beyond the lower jaw with a very large mouth. All of the more than 100 species are very similar in appearance, and few of them measure more than 4 inches in length. They feed on tiny organisms, travel in large groups near shore, and are rarely found in depths greater than 200 feet. Anchovies are worldwide in distribution but are most abundant in subtropical and tropical waters where they are important forage fish for a wide variety of predator fishes.

ANCHOVY INFORMATION

Crown Prince packs the European anchovy, *Engraulis encrasicolus*, for our Anchovy Fillets and Anchovy Paste. This is the principal anchovy used for human food. It is harvested in large quantities from the Mediterranean northward to the Scandinavian countries and southward along the coast of Morocco. Our anchovies are fished off the coast of, and packed in, Morocco.

Anchovy eggs are elliptical or oval, and they float near the surface. They hatch within a few days after being released, and the young do not mature for three to four years. Spawning periods are June to August in the Southern North Sea, April to September in the Mediterranean, and May to August in the Sea of Azov. There are five geographical races of anchovies covering the Mediterranean to northern Europe. In summer the fish migrate to the vicinity of the coast, but in winter they move into deeper water.

Fresh anchovies can have a bitter taste. Traditionally, the body is salted and packed in barrels maturing from 3-12 months in storage. The anchovies are first bled in tanks with salt, beheaded, then washed with water and salt. They are then placed in large trash can size barrels in alternate layers with sea salt. A weight is placed on the lid to compress the fish. As the months of maturing progress, additional weight is

added to the lid. The outside temperature affects the speed of curing (the hotter the weather, the faster the curing). However, a slower process is better for an extended shelf life. In addition, if anchovies are allowed to cure for too long they become too mature and turn into a paste. The best temperature for a slow maturing is 60°F. This traditional process for curing anchovies has been used for hundreds of years. Recent changes to this process include the control of temperature throughout the entire curing process. An expert with dozens of years of experience decides the exact moment when the anchovy is properly cured. This is the only product in the Crown Prince Natural line that is not cooked, but cured. Crown Prince buys from only one anchovy packer who is one of the largest suppliers to Italy and France.

After maturing, the anchovies are poured onto a table, trimmed and washed. The fish are centrifuged to remove moisture (the HACCP approved method), then pressed between sheets of kraft paper to remove more water. This last step is a Sicilian method of finishing anchovies and is used by our packer at our request. We are the only customer to insist on both methods being used. It results in more fish per jar and a drier product; it is costlier but produces a safer product since less water reduces the chance of contamination.



Anchovies are separated by size, skin and bones removed, cleaned of their fins, and peeled into two fillets. They are placed in jars, filled with olive oil from selected sources in Italy, Spain, or Morocco then run through a sealing machine. Finally, the jars are washed in mild soap and water before being labeled and packed in cases.

Anchovy Paste is made from the cured anchovy fillets which are ground to a paste, with olive oil added, and then processed into tubes.

A word about our olive oil. In European Union countries, only the first cold-pressed refined olive oil may be used in the canned fish industry. This oil is known as "refined olive oil" and it must meet certain specifications. The term "extra virgin olive oil" is not used for canning oils in Europe.

Anchovies should not smell when the jar or tube is opened. A strong smell would indicate that they are too mature.

Also remember that the redder the fish the more mature they are and they are therefore not a desirable product. The anchovy fillets should be firm when pulled and not fall apart. All anchovies in the same jar should be uniform in size. Whole fillets, rather than pieces of fish, indicate well-processed product. The smaller the fish the saltier they will be - the saltiness can be decreased by rinsing or soaking the anchovy before cooking with it. Anchovy fillets should be completely free of skin and the majority of its fine bones.

In acknowledgment - all of the work of processing anchovies (beheading, washing, skinning, filleting, and packing) is done in Morocco by women by hand. These women frequently are from families who have worked with anchovies for generations and on whom packers rely for their expertise. We respect and appreciate the traditions they maintain.



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