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New advice from the Marine Conservation Society reveals the right fish for the right month

Friday night might be fish night....but is March the month for mussels or is it mullet in May and dab in December?

A brand new guide from the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), the UK's leading marine charity, is set to help consumers make the right fish choice in the right month - because when it comes to fish, size and age really do matter!

The Society's 'Fish of the Month' guides shoppers to increase the sustainability of their seafood choices by avoiding eating species in their breeding season, and baby fish, and recommending fish are only eaten above the size and age at which they mature.

MCS Fisheries Officer, Bernadette Clarke, says consumers have a key role to play in safeguarding the future of our fisheries, seas and marine wildlife by making environmentally sustainable and responsible choices when buying fish and shellfish.

"We want to help guide consumers to choose fish so as to avoid eating them during their spawning or breeding times. For lovers of seafood who are already aware of choosing their fish from the most sustainable fisheries, 'Fish of the Month' can now help them go one stage further and eat the right fish in the right month and at the right size. Leading chefs can also have a role in influencing consumer's choices by publically committing to and only sourcing their fish from the most sustainable supplies available."

The 'Fish of the Month' feature is available on the charity's popular fishonline website (www.goodfishguide.co.uk/fish-of-the-month) is used by consumers, industry and chefs.

Twelve leading chefs have supplied a recipe for the month in which it's best to eat their chosen fish. In March, award winning food writer, restaurateur and fishmonger, Mitch Tonks, who has three restaurants – RockFish Grill & Seafood Market in Bristol, and The Seahorse and RockFish Seafood and Chips in Dartmouth, cooks up steamed mussels from the Devon coast with bay and chilli. Mussels spawn between April and August meaning March is the best month to enjoy them.

Marine Conservation Society

Protecting our **seas, shores** and **wildlife**

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Mitch says: “The flavours in this dish are perfect with mussels. I'm not a fan of cream in mussels and the butter and oil emulsify with the salty slightly hot and savoury mussel juices created by the bay and chilli to make a truly delicious sauce”.

Caroline Bennett, owner of the sushi chain, Moshi Moshi, chooses Dab as a great choice for September – it spawns between April and June and can grow to 40cms in length. Caroline’s recipe is for Salt & Sansho pepper (Japanese) ‘fish & chips’.

“Dab is a wonderfully sweet tasting fish, less muddy tasting than plaice, and beautifully firm textured. Larger dabs are rare, but when you can find one over 400gm or so, regard it as a real treat! This recipe is great for the smaller fish, as it uses the whole fish, bones and all. Dabs aren’t easy to find, as they tend to be small and therefore of low market value, so are in danger of being discarded. Be wary of how your fish was caught – the smaller ones are often caught by beam trawlers, but you can get larger sized static net caught dabs, and these are the ones to go for,” says Caroline.

Also on the twelve month fishy calendar are Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall who chooses pouting for July, food critic and chef, Allegra McEvedy, who picks out red gurnard for February and owner of the Duke of Cambridge gastro pub, Geetie Singh MBE, who goes for pilchards in October. Consumers can also find recipes from Cyrus Todiwala, CJ Jackson, Darina Allen, Henry Dimbleby, Giorgio Locatelli, Tom Kitchin and Kate Humble

So if you like your seafood and are trying to eat sustainably, don’t leave your choices to chance, make use of the MCS guide to the right fish at the right size and in the right month.

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Editor’s notes:

The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) is the UK charity dedicated to protecting our seas, shores and wildlife. MCS campaigns for clean seas and beaches, sustainable fisheries, and protection of marine life. Through education, community involvement and collaboration, MCS raises awareness of the many threats that face our seas and promotes individual, industry and government action to protect the marine environment. MCS provides information and guidance on many aspects of marine conservation and produces the annual *Good Beach Guide*, the *Good Fish Guide* and *Fishonline* on sustainable seafood, as well as involving thousands of volunteers in projects and surveys such as *MCS Beachwatch*. www.mcsuk.org.

MCS Fish to Eat and Fish to Avoid lists are generated by assessing the relative health of each fish stock, and the sustainability of the various fishing methods used. A rating of 5 (Fish to Avoid) is given to those fish that MCS recommends be avoided because they are

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overfished; vulnerable to exploitation; poorly managed; and whose method of harvesting causes bycatch (capture of dolphins, sharks, seabirds and non-target fish) and/or damage to the seabed. A rating of 1 and 2 (Fish to Eat) is awarded to the most sustainably harvested seafood including fish from certified fisheries. Ratings 3 and 4 indicate increasing levels of concern regarding the status of the fish stock, or the environmental impact of the fishing method used to catch them.