

HOOK N' COOK

White Bass

A Welcome New Resident



The bass must be a tardy fish. It's slow in finding out what family it really belongs to. There are smallmouth bass, largemouth bass and rock bass which belong to the family of sun fishes (or centrarchidae as the biologist call them). The silver bass, correctly called the freshwater drum, is actually a member of the drum family (scaenidae). And finally, there is the white bass, who is a member of the family of fish called sea bass (serranidae). Quite a collection - all promising great angling fun and most enjoyable eating.

The white bass is an excellent fish for the angler. It fights well, takes a hook readily, travels in schools and is a prime fish on the dinner plate. From the fish culturists point of view these fish are easily raised and transported. For these reasons the white bass has been widely stocked in the United States. In Canada they have long

been known in eastern Ontario and in 1944 white bass were reported in the St. Lawrence River as far down as Quebec City.

In Manitoba the white bass is a relatively new resident. In the fall of 1962 a commercial fisherman caught the first known white bass in the south end of Lake Winnipeg. In the next few years more and more were caught in the gillnets of Lake Winnipeg and showed up in the anglers creels along the Red River. It is now not uncommon for an angler to land a half dozen in a day fishing on the Red River.

In 1952 North Dakota stocked Lake Ashtabula, about 60 miles west of Fargo, with white bass. It is believed this is the population which flushed into the Red River and subsequently moved north into Manitoba.

The white bass has a compressed robust body. The average length ranges from 25 to 30 centimeters (about 11 inches) however, larger ones do exceed 40 cm and 0.5 kg in weight. The predominant silvery coloration shades to a darker green or grey on the back. A major characteristic is the five to seven dark horizontal stripes along the body. The eye of the white bass is tinted yellow. However, because the white bass is a newcomer to Manitoba, very little is known of its life history in these waters.

White bass spawn in late spring when water temperatures range from 13°C to 18°C. Sexually mature fish form schools and move into the shoals or stream mouths. Spawning takes place, during the daylight hours, near the water surface. As females drop their eggs, males fertilize them as they sink to the bottom. The adhesive eggs then attach themselves to bottom

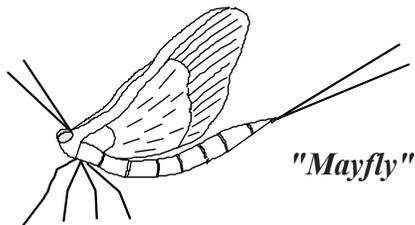




vegetation, gravel or boulders. The average female produces 500,000 eggs. The eggs receive no parental care and hatch in approximately 46 hours. The hit or miss style of spawning and the lack of parental care are probably a good thing - because a fish that size, producing half a million eggs, could be very difficult to control if there was a high hatching success.

Although white bass arrived in Manitoba via the silty and turbid Red River they prefer clear water. This may account for their apparent increase in the clear northern portions of Lake Winnipeg's south basin. The life expectancy of this species in Manitoba waters is unknown; but in other areas they are relatively short lived - four to five years on average.

It appears that white bass are visual feeders preying on other small fish. However, smaller white bass and about one third of the larger fishes are known to take both crustaceans and insects - mainly mayflies.



"Mayfly"

Mayflies are simply a more aesthetic term for what Manitobans call "Fishflies". This insect is plentiful in the Lake Winnipeg area, as anyone who has spent time at Winnipeg and Grand Beach will know. Perhaps this is a partial reason for their fairly dramatic increase in Manitoba.

The white bass can be prepared for the table in any of the traditional methods such as filleting, planking, barbecuing or smoking. These methods are covered in other pamphlets in the

Hook N' Cook series particularly the one entitled Barbecued Fish. But should you wish to try something new give this recipe a try.

Cranberry Stuffed Bass

Ingredients:

2 or 3 fairly large white bass	1/2 cup whole-berry cranberry sauce
salt	1/4 teaspoon onion powder
paprika	2 tablespoons chopped parsley
1 apple, peeled, cored & chopped	1 egg well beaten
grated rind & juice of one lemon	1/4 cup melted butter
1 cup cooked rice	

Scale the bass and thoroughly clean out the body cavity and gills with a slit along the belly. With the salt and paprika sprinkle the fish both inside and out. Combine apple, lemon rind, rice cranberries, celery salt, onion powder, parsley and egg and use this mixture to stuff the fish. Sew or skewer the opening. Place fish in a greased foil-lined shallow pan. Brush over the fish the combination of butter and lemon juice. Bake for 40 minutes in a preheated 350° oven, or until golden brown and the flesh flakes easily. Carefully place fish on a warmed serving platter and remove skewers. Garnish with parsley and thin lemon slices. Small glazed carrots and whipped potatoes make excellent additions to this dish.

For more information on White Bass or fisheries in general, please contact either Manitoba Conservation Fisheries Branch at 945-6640 or the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation at 983-6600.

