



## Chilean Sea Bass

Also called Patagonian toothfish, the Chilean sea bass is one of the most sought-after fish in the world. The once-obscure fish became a culinary celebrity during the 1990s. Its flesh becomes oil-rich in frigid Antarctic waters and is hard to overcook.

However, fish populations cannot keep up with the demand. Stocks crashed as a result of overfishing and widespread poaching.

### Where they live

Chilean sea bass is a deep-water species caught in southern ocean waters near and around Antarctica. The Chileans were the first to market toothfish commercially in the United States, earning it the name Chilean sea bass, although it is really not a bass and it is not always caught in Chilean waters.

### How they're caught

Chilean sea bass are caught using hooks attached to long-lines that are strung behind fishing boats. Some Chilean sea bass is caught in waters off the coast of Chile, then iced and shipped to the United States fresh. However, the majority of Chilean sea bass is harvested in distant waters of Antarctica, frozen onboard factory vessels, and shipped several weeks to several months later. Both fresh and frozen Chilean sea bass are available for consumption in the United States.

Large unreported catches from illegal fishing of this valuable fish has made effective management difficult. In 2000, more than 16,000 tons of Chilean sea bass were legally harvested in the Antarctic management area. Estimates vary, but there may be up to twice that amount taken illegally.

### Why they're in trouble

The Chilean Sea Bass is seriously over fished and depleted. Chilean sea bass is a long-lived, slow growing fish that does not reach sexual maturity until at least 10 years of age.

The United States, by far the largest market for the fish, imports about half of the legally sanctioned global catch. Japan and China are the world's next largest consumers. Pirate fishing fleets that disregard fishing limits are illegally catching this fish at a rampant rate. Unless people stop eating Chilean sea bass, it may be commercially extinct within five years.