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Fish and Wildlife Service

Fishery Leaflet 181

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FISH CAN BE STORED IN REFRIGERATED LOCKERS WITH OTHER FOODS

By Martin Heerdt, Jr., Chemist,
Division of Commercial Fisheries.

On occasions when "off" odors develop in vegetables, dairy products and meats stored in freezers, the cause is generally attributed to fish located elsewhere in the room. Actually, the fish are seldom the source of these foreign odors. Many locker plant operators, homemakers and those who have need to provide low temperature storage for frozen foods are in doubt as to the advisability of storing frozen fish along with their other commodities. They are either fearful or uncertain as to the possibility of contaminating their produce with fishy odors and tastes.

While the locker industry is comparatively young, the larger frozen food industry, upon which it depends for information, is barely a few years its senior. These first few years in any industry are always years of pioneering, when many unforseen problems require solution. While the early users of lockers in the Middle West were discovering a need for protective packaging to prevent desiccation of their meats, the Northwest users were discovering that fruits likewise needed this protection. Gradually the people of the Middle West have learned that meats, particularly pork, had a maximum cold storage life, after which the fats became rancid, while the people of the Northwest have learned the need for blanching to prevent the development of off flavors in frozen vegetables.

Likewise dairy science has discovered that fish odors or flavors in butter may result from at least four sources other than fish. According to Sommers and Smit (1923), salt favors the development of fishy flavor in butter. Davies and Mattick (1928) report that a fishiness in dairy products has often resulted from the breakdown of lecithin, particularly in milks possessing metallic contamination. According to Davies (1936), milk and butter from cows fed generously on byproducts from the manufacture of beet sugar often develops a fishy flavor. More recently Davies (1941) reports that the growth of acid-producing molds will cause fishiness to develop in butter in storage before tallowiness sets in.

Before scientific and practical knowledge on the use of locker storage had been accumulated, operators and users alike believed off odors arose from some contaminating product. Since stale fish was known to possess disagreeable odors, it was assumed that all fish were malodorous, with the result that fresh seafoods were banned from many locker plants. When questioned on this subject of frozen fish storage, many operators would shrug and say, "No fish allowed", or "I do not

Oregon

Astoria Marine Construction Co., Astoria.

California

Al Larson Boat Shop, San Pedro.
Anderson & Cristofani, Innes & Griffith Sts., San Francisco 24.
Colberg Boat Works, Stockton.
Fellows and Stewart, Inc., Terminal Island.
Harbor Boat Building Co., Los Angeles Harbor, Terminal Island.
Harbor Boat Works, Harbor Drive at 26th St., San Diego.
Hodgson-Greene-Haldeman, 1409 W. 7th St., Long Beach.
Kettenburg Boat Works, Box 65, Pt. Loma Sta., San Diego 6.
Lynch Shipbuilding Co., Foot of 28th St., San Diego 12.
Martinolich Shipbuilding Co., San Francisco.
Master Builders, Foot of Paru St., Alameda.
National Steel & Shipbuilding Corp., Harbor Dr. at 28th, San Diego 12.
North American Shipbuilding Corp., 717 Coast Highway 101, Newport Beach.
Nunes Brothers, Sausalito.
San Diego Marine Construction Co., Foot of Sampson St., San Diego.
Sausalito Shipbuilding Co., Sausalito.

GREAT LAKES DISTRICT

Michigan

Hugh Lee Iron Works, Saginaw.
Sheldon Marine Co., Ferrysburg.

Wisconsin

Burger Boat Co., Manitowoc.
Peterson Builders, Inc., Sturgeon Bay.
Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co., Sturgeon Bay.

Note: The Fish and Wildlife Service assumes no responsibility in providing this list to inquirers.

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Only fresh fish properly packaged is recommended for locker storage. The locker operator should encourage the preparation of only high-quality products, for, in this way, the customers will obtain the more satisfactory storage of their products. Commercially frozen and packaged fish and seafood are usually of very good quality, therefore they are suited to locker storage.

In dressing fish at home or in the locker plant for refrigerated storage, it is recommended that the fish be cut in as large pieces as possible in order to minimize the amount of exposed surface. It is advisable to prepare pieces of fish of the size normally used for a meal, rather than to prepare individual steaks. The use of a wrapping paper which is adequately moisture-vapor-proof is mandatory if satisfactory storage is to be attained. Ordinary waxed or parchment papers are quite unsatisfactory, and special papers such as are manufactured for use with frozen foods must be employed. The product should be wrapped tightly in order to minimize the amount of enclosed air; furthermore, a generous overlap is necessary to seal the product from the surrounding atmosphere. Shellfish should be removed from their shells, cleaned, and packed in a weak brine solution (about 2 percent). Ordinary waxed cardboard cartons either of the ice cream or cylindrical type are unsatisfactory for storing shellfish. Better results are obtained by using glass jars provided with tight lids and sealed with jar rubbers or gasket compound. The products should be covered with the dilute brine solution and an air space of at least one inch provided to allow for expansion during freezing. No difficulty with the jars breaking during freezing will occur if this air space is provided, and the use of air tight jars greatly minimizes discoloration and "off" color development.

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