

YELLOWFIN TUNA

- *Thunnus albacares*



Masa Ushioda - SEAPICS

REEL LIFE: Although yellowfin tuna are fast hunters, they are also hunted – caught by commercial and sports fishers.

Also known as: A'ahi, Ahi (Hawaiian), Allison Tuna, Asiati, Badla-an, Jaydher, Kababa, Kihada, Maha'o, Otara, Palaha, Rabil, Te baibo, Thon Jaune, Thunfisch, Tonno Albacora, Tonno Macropteros, To'ou, Toghu, Toghu hangar.

Hatchlings: A yellowfin tuna hatchling will feed on plankton and then small fish, krill, squid and crustaceans to grow to about 60 cm in one year. It seems that young yellowfin tuna grow more slowly in Indonesia and Philippines than they do in the Pacific Islands.

Yellowfin tuna can be as long as 200 cm and weigh a hefty 150 kilos. Most

yellowfin tuna will reach maturity at about 2 years of age and a size of 100 cm. They spawn in warm waters of 26°C (78.8°F). Each female adult yellowfin tuna will spawn a million eggs a year but the lives of yellowfin tuna are short – with the average age being recorded as just 5-6 years old.

School days: Yellowfin tuna prefer waters of 18°C-31°C (64.4°F – 87.8°F) and can generally be found in the top 100 metres of the ocean, sometimes gathering around drifting objects such as wood, patches of seagrass, boats, or dead marine mammals. Yellowfin tuna are found throughout the Pacific, from latitudes of approximately 40°N to 40°S.

Yellowfin tuna are fast hunters which prey on a wide variety of fish including dolphinfish, pilchard, anchovy, flyingfish, mackerel, lancetfish, and other tuna such as the smaller skipjack, plus species such as cuttlefish, squid, octopus, shrimp, and larvae stages of lobster or crabs.

Smaller yellowfin tuna may be eaten by larger tuna, seabirds, wahoo, sharks and billfish but the larger tuna are only hunted by the great hunters such as the mako shark or toothed whales such as the false killer whale.



Reel life: Yellowfin tuna are caught by a variety of methods, from small-scale artisanal fisheries in Pacific Island waters and Southeast Asia to large foreign fishing longline vessels (that take mostly adult yellowfin tuna) and foreign purse seine vessels that can often capture younger tuna.

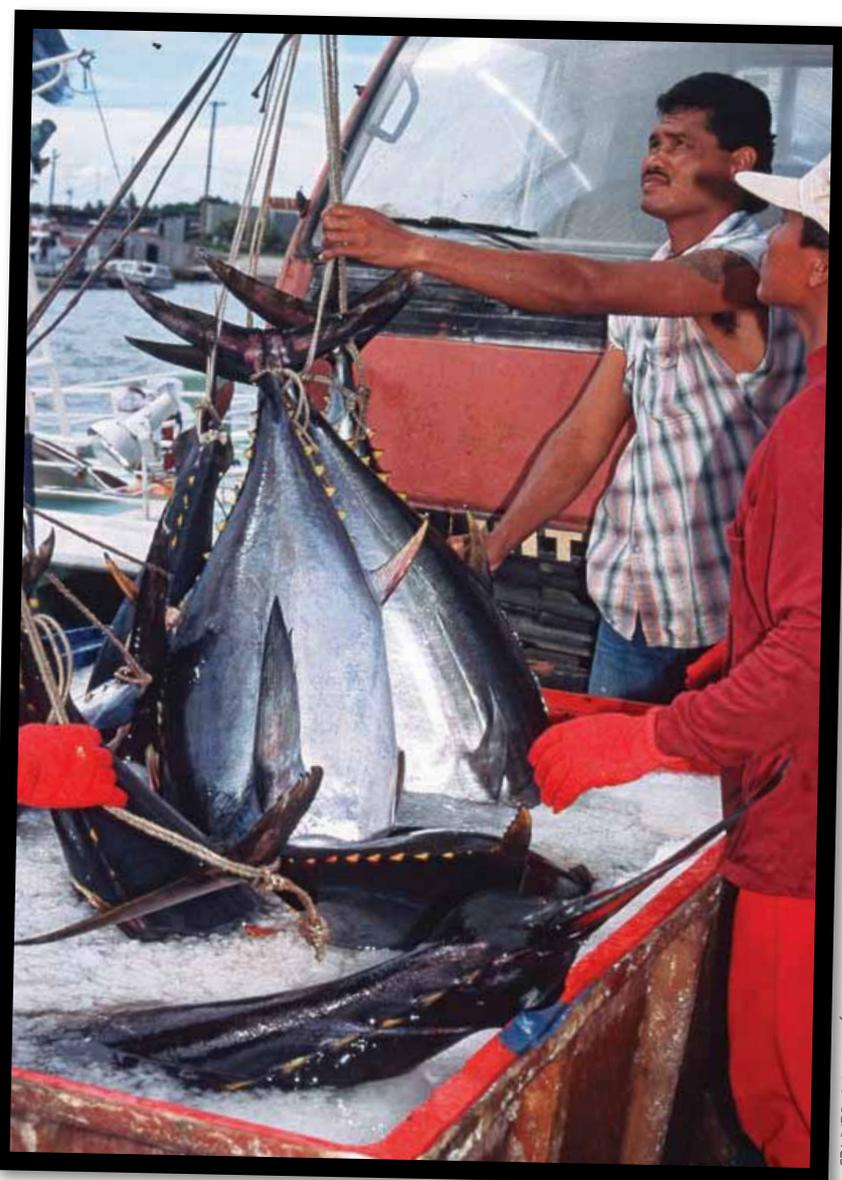
Most yellowfin tuna (about 50% of those caught) are taken by purse seine fishing vessels. The Western and Central Pacific Ocean catch was around 430,000 tonnes in 2006 with around one quarter of this catch taken by Indonesia and Philippines.

Yellowfin tuna are considered subject to overfishing.

Out of water: Yellowfin tuna has a pink to deep red coloured flesh that becomes lighter when cooked and can go brown in a few days so needs to be loined or filleted shortly before use. It is a popular sushi fish, firm and mild in flavour, but unlike the ultimate sushi tuna bigeye and bluefin tuna, it quickly loses its colour. Sometimes yellowfin can lack the pigmentation when caught (which is said to be due to spawning or overheating as the fish die) and these fish are often referred to as "burnt" tuna - less valuable for sashimi and more likely to dry out if grilled.

Most yellowfin tuna is canned, fresh and frozen and it is also sometimes smoked. Major canneries using yellowfin tuna are in Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Mexico, Spain and Italy.

US, Japan and Europe are the major markets for yellowfin tuna.



OUT OF WATER Yellowfin tuna is often delivered fresh or frozen for sashimi.

Tanya Burnett - SEAPICS