Get to know which fish from the Niagara River are safe to eat.

ourniagarariver.ca/fish
DISCLAIMER
This document is based on the information given in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish. For information purposes only. Please consult the Guide for more detailed advice especially if you eat multiple species or fish from other locations.

The information has not been endorsed by the governments of Ontario or Canada. The content is based on information given for the Canadian side of the Niagara River only.

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ourniagarariver.ca/fish
2019-2020
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Fishing is a fun way to get outdoors. Fish can be a nutritious part of a balanced diet. Eating fish provides an excellent source of protein, omega-3 fats, and other essential nutrients. However, depending on the type, size, and number of fish eaten, people may be at risk for eating harmful chemicals in the fish they eat.

The Niagara River's water quality has improved over the last 30 years but there are still some chemicals in water that can collect in fish such as mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins/furan, and photomirex.

Fish from Ontario lakes and rivers (including the Niagara River) are routinely collected and tested for these chemicals by the Government of Ontario. The data are used to advise the public on safe eating of fish through the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish (or Guide, for short).

A polluted fish may not taste, look, or smell different than a fish that is not polluted. The chemicals are too small to see with the human eye. That's why it's so important to follow the advice for choosing and eating fish. A full copy of the Guide can be found online at: ontario.ca/fishguide

This booklet is for the Ontario side of the Niagara River only. It is meant to provide an easy-to-understand summary of the advice given in the Guide so you can make the best choices to Eat Safe Fish from the Niagara River. Refer to the Guide for more detailed information, especially if you eat different fishes or eat fish from other locations. Please follow Ontario’s recreational fishing regulations (not provided in this document). The Niagara River is included in fisheries management zones 19 and 20, depending on where you are fishing. Fishing rules are found at: ontario.ca/fishing
Choose Wisely. Eat Safely.

Some chemicals in the water can collect in fish and may pose a risk to your health. There are many ways to reduce your risk of consuming chemicals from the fish you catch:

- Choose leaner species such as walleye, perch, and panfish
- Eat smaller fish
- Avoid larger predatory fish and bottom feeders
- Remove fat and skin from fish before eating
- Do not eat organs

Some chemicals such as mercury and perfluorooctane sulfonate are found throughout the fish flesh. Other than limiting the fish you eat, there is nothing else you can do to reduce or remove these chemicals.

Know the 3 Cs: Choose, Clean, Cook!

Choose wisely

Smaller fish tend to have fewer chemicals. Some species have fewer chemicals based on their feeding habits and location (e.g., bass, walleye, perch, panfish).

Clean & Trim

Some chemicals like PCBs and dioxins collect in the fat of the fish. Cleaning and trimming the fat before cooking can reduce your risk of eating chemicals. Remove the fillet, cut away skin, trim any fat and throw away the organs.

Cook

Even after trimming away visible fat, some fat can still be present inside the fillet. Cook fish on a grill, rack, or broiler pan in the oven so that fat drips away. If you deep-fry fish, do not reuse the oil.
How to use this booklet.

This booklet is meant to be a quick, easy-to-understand guide to choosing and eating safe fish from the Niagara River. Follow these simple steps with this guide to make sure you Eat Safe Fish.

1. Determine where you are fishing (upper or lower Niagara River).
2. Are you considered to be in the general or sensitive population?
3. Identify and measure your fish.
4. Refer to this booklet or check the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish to find out if the fish you caught is safe to eat.
5. Keep your catch on ice or in a refrigerator to avoid spoilage until it can be cooked or preserved.

The information provided is derived from advice given for the Niagara River in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish. For more details or advice for other locations, visit ontario.ca/fishguide.
General vs Sensitive Populations.

**General population** refers to an average sized adult weighing 154 lbs.

**Sensitive population** refers to women of child-bearing age and children under age 15.

The advice for the sensitive population is more strict due to the increased health risks.

The size of the fish matters!

There is different advice given for different sizes of the same species. Use a measuring tape to check the size of your catch (from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail).

What kind of fish did you catch?

Make sure you know what type of fish you caught to ensure you’re making the best choices. Use this booklet to help identify your catch.

How much you eat matters.

The advice in the *Guide to Eating Ontario Fish* is based on the amount of skinless, boneless fish eaten, measured by the number of meals eaten.

One meal is about 227 g or 8 oz (size of a dinner plate or two adult palms) for an average adult weighing 70 kg (154 lbs).
What the colours mean.

To make choosing which Niagara River fish to eat easier, fish are categorized into three colours: red, yellow, and green based on how many meals per month are recommended in the *Guide to Eating Ontario Fish*. Don’t forget that different sizes and species will have different coloured symbols!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Meals per Month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAFE</td>
<td>Safer choice</td>
<td>8 or more meals per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUTION</td>
<td>Caution, limit amount eaten</td>
<td>1-4 meals per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOID</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>0 meals per month</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Where you catch matters.

There is different advice for eating Niagara River fish depending on where you catch them. The Niagara River is divided into the Upper Niagara River (upstream of the Falls) or the Lower Niagara River (bottom of the Falls to Lake Ontario).

There is different advice given for different sizes of the same species. Use a measuring tape to check the size of your catch (from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail).
Black Crappie
Promoxis negromaculatus
A cool-water fish native to Ontario.

18-25 centimetres
(7-10 inches)
0.23-0.45 kilograms
(0.5-1 pounds)

Silver with blue or green iridescence
7 to 8 dorsal fin spines
Large mouth extends below middle of eye
Small, deep bodied
6 to 7 anal fin spines

© MECP

15-25 cm | 6-10 in

12
Bluegill
*Lepomis macrochirus*

A warm-water fish native to Ontario. Part of the sunfish family.

- **10 to 11 dorsal fin spines**
- **Black ear flap with no pale edge**
- **Small mouth ends before middle of eye**
- **Belly is silver to yellow**
- **3 anal fin spines**
- **Black spot at rear end of dorsal fin**

**15-22.5 centimetres**
(6-9 inches)

**200 grams**
(0.4 pounds)

---

**GENERAL POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

No information currently available

**LOWER RIVER**

15-20 cm | 6-8 in

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**SENSITIVE POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

No information currently available

**LOWER RIVER**

15-20 cm | 6-8 in

---

**Bluegill**

*Bluegill* *Lepomis macrochirus*

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**200 grams**
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**GENERAL POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

No information currently available

**LOWER RIVER**

15-20 cm | 6-8 in

---

**SENSITIVE POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

No information currently available

**LOWER RIVER**

15-20 cm | 6-8 in

---

© MECP
**Brown Bullhead**

*Ameiurus nebulosis*

A warm-water fish native to Ontario. Looks similar to catfish.

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**Elongated with broad, flat head**

**Very sharp bony fin rays on pectoral fin and one on dorsal fin**

**Square tail**

**Belly generally white**

**Four sets of barbels; 3 under head and one pair on top**

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**20-36 centimetres**

(8-14 inches)

**No information currently available**

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### GENERAL POPULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPPER RIVER</th>
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<tr>
<td>15-35 cm</td>
<td>15-30 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-14 in</td>
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### SENSITIVE POPULATION

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© MECP
Brown Trout
*Salmo trutta*
A cold-water fish introduced and naturalized in Ontario.

- Silvery or pale brown sides with dark spots, often with a lighter ring
- Brown back (may also be blue-green)
- The only salmon or trout with orange on adipose fin
- White mouth and gums
- White belly
- Short, stocky caudal peduncle
- Leading anal fin ray extends the length of the fin

**Dimensions**
- 20-60 centimetres (8-24 inches)
- 0.5–4.5 kilograms (1-9.5 pounds)

**General Population**
- Upper River: 30-35 cm | 12-14 in
- Lower River: DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE

**Sensitive Population**
- Upper River: 30-35 cm | 12-14 in
- Lower River: DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE
Channel Catfish
*Ictalurus punctatus*

A warm-water fish native to Ontario. Looks similar to Brown Bullhead.

- Grey to yellow to silver-white belly
- Forked tail
- Large, elongated body with no scales
- Lighter sides often with spots
- 4 pairs of barbels around the mouth

**General Population**

- 36-53 centimetres (14-21 inches)
- 0.9–1.8 kilograms (2-4 pounds)

**Sensitive Population**

- No information currently available

**Upper River**

- No information currently available

**Lower River**

- 40-45 cm | 16-18 in
- 45-75 cm | 18-30 in

*DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE*
Chinook Salmon
*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*
A cold-water fish that was introduced and naturalized in Ontario.

**General Population**

**Upper River**
No information currently available

**Lower River**
45-75 cm | 18-30 in

**Sensitive Population**

**Upper River**
No information currently available

**Lower River**
DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE

**30-100 centimetres**
(12-39 inches)

**3.1–6.8 kilograms**
(7-15 pounds)

- Blue or green back with silvery sides
- Black mouth and gums
- Elongated, moderately deep-bodied fish
- Spotted tail
- White belly
- Short, narrow caudal peduncle

© MECP
Coho Salmon
Oncorhynchus kisutch
A cold-water fish that was introduced and naturalized in Ontario.

Deep body but thin from side to side
Blue or green back
Tail spotted on upper lobe only
Dark mouth, light grey gums
Silvery sides
White belly
Short, narrow caudal peduncle

30-75 centimetres
(12-30 inches)
2.25-4.5 kilograms
(5-10 pounds)

© Tim Knepp

GENERAL POPULATION

No information currently available

UPPER RIVER

No information currently available

LOWER RIVER

40-55 cm | 16-22 in

> 55 cm | > 22 in

DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE

SENSITIVE POPULATION

UPPER RIVER

LOWER RIVER

COHO SALMON
**Common Carp**  
*Cyprinus carpio*

A warm-water fish introduced to Ontario. Looks similar to Freshwater Drum.

- **Partially scaled cheek and gill cover**
- **Barbels beside mouth**
- **Orange-red lower fins**
- **Yellowish belly**
- **30-75 centimetres**  
  (12-30 inches)
- **2.25–4.5 kilograms**  
  (5-10 pounds)
- **Back and sides from silver to olive-green, brassy or grey**
- **One dorsal spine**

**General Population**

**Upper River**
- 20-45 cm | 8-18 in
- 45-75 cm | 18-30 in

**Lower River**
- 40-45 cm | 16-18 in
- 45-75 cm | 18-30 in
- > 75 cm | > 30 in

**Sensitive Population**

**Upper River**
- 20-45 cm | 8-18 in
- 45-75 cm | 18-30 in

**Lower River**
- 40-45 cm | 16-18 in
- 45-60 cm | 18-24 in
- > 60 cm | > 24 in

© MECP

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**Freshwater Drum**  
*Aplodinotus grunniens*

A cool-water fish native to Ontario. Other common name is Sheepshead.

- **Body** is grey with purple/bronze reflection.
- **Rounded, triangular tail**
- **White lips**
- **8 to 9 dorsal spines**
- **Humped back with a long, sloping forehead**

**45-50 centimetres**  
*(18-20 inches)*

**2.3-6.8 kilograms**  
*(5-15 pounds)*

**45-50 centimetres**  
*(18-20 inches)*

**2.3-6.8 kilograms**  
*(5-15 pounds)*

**GENERAL POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

- 25-30 cm | 10-12 in
- 30-55 cm | 12-22 in

**LOWER RIVER**

- 16-55 cm | 6-22 in

**SENSITIVE POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

- 25-30 cm | 10-12 in
- 30-50 cm | 12-20 in

**LOWER RIVER**

- 15-40 cm | 6-16 in
- 40-55 cm | 16-22 in

© MECP
**Lake Trout**  
*Salvelinus namaycush*

A cold-water fish native to Ontario. Similar to Brook Trout and Splake.

- 30-80 centimetres (12-31 inches)
- 1-5 kilograms (2-10 pounds)

**General Population**

- Upper River: No information currently available
- Lower River: 55-65 cm | 22-26 in

**Sensitive Population**

- Upper River: No information currently available
- Lower River: DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE
**Largemouth Bass**
*Micropterus salmoides*

A warm-water fish native to Ontario.
Looks similar to Smallmouth and Rock Bass.

- Back and sides are green to olive
- 9 to 11 dorsal fin spines
- Upper jaw extends beyond eye
- Medium sized, deep-bodied fish
- Belly is yellow to white
- Broken horizontal stripe along body

**GENERAL POPULATION**

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<tr>
<td>40-45 cm</td>
<td>16-18 in</td>
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© MECP
Northern Pike

*Esox lucius*

A cool-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as pike, northern, or jackfish.

**Tips of tail fin**

- More rounded than muskellunge

**10 pores on underside of lower jaw**

**Fully scaled cheek and partially scaled gill cover**

**Very large, elongated body**

**Dark back fades to creamy white belly**

**Tips of tail fin more rounded than muskellunge**

**Dark green to brown body with light, yellowish or white spots**

**Dark back**

**Fades to creamy white belly**

**25-75 cm | 10-30 in**

**50-75 cm | 20-30 in**

**60-75 cm | 24-30 in**

**> 75 cm | > 30 in**

**GENERAL POPULATION**

**SENSITIVE POPULATION**

**50-75+ cm | 20-30 in**

**> 75 cm | > 30 in**

**25-75 cm | 10-30 in**

**60-75 cm | 24-30 in**

**50-75 cm | 20-30 in**

**> 75 cm | > 30 in**

45-75 centimetres

(18-30 inches)

0.9-4.3 kilograms

(2-9.5 pounds)

A cool-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as pike, northern, or jackfish.

**Esox lucius**

45-75 centimetres

(18-30 inches)

0.9-4.3 kilograms

(2-9.5 pounds)

© U.S Fish & Wildlife Service
**Pumpkinseed**

*Lepomis gibbosus*

A warm-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as sunfish, and pond perch.

- **18-23 centimetres (7-9 inches)**
- **0.2 kilograms (0.4 pounds)**

- Ear flap with orange or red spot
- Wavy, blue-green stripes on sides of head
- Un-notched dorsal fin with 10 to 11 spines
- Small mouth does not extend to below the middle of the eye
- 3 anal fin spines

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**GENERAL POPULATION**

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*Pumpkinseed (Lepomis gibbosus)* is a warm-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as sunfish, and pond perch. It can grow up to 18-23 centimetres (7-9 inches) and weighs up to 0.2 kilograms (0.4 pounds). The fish has an un-notched dorsal fin with 10 to 11 spines, wavy, blue-green stripes on the sides of its head, an ear flap with an orange or red spot, a small mouth that does not extend below the middle of the eye, and 3 anal fin spines.

**GENERAL POPULATION**

- **UPPER RIVER**: 15-20 cm | 6-8 in
- **LOWER RIVER**: No information currently available

**SENSITIVE POPULATION**

- **UPPER RIVER**: 15-20 cm | 6-8 in
- **LOWER RIVER**: No information currently available

© Joseph Tomelleri
Rainbow Smelt
Osmerus mordax
A cold-water fish native to Ontario.

Slender and cylindrical body
Silvery pale green back
Tongue has prominent teeth
Mouth extends beyond the centre of the eye
Iridescent purple, blue, pink sides with light belly

7.5-25 centimetres (3-10 inches)
0.2 kilograms (0.4 pounds)

© Carlyn Iverson

Rainbow Smelt
Osmerus mordax
A cold-water fish native to Ontario.

7.5-25 centimetres (3-10 inches)
0.2 kilograms (0.4 pounds)

© Carlyn Iverson
Rainbow Trout
Oncorhynchus mykiss
A cold-water fish that was introduced and naturalized in Ontario.

- Pink lateral stripe
- Long, stocky caudal peduncle
- Mouth and gums often white
- Silver body with many small dark spots
- Radiating rows of spots over tail

**20-60 centimetres** (8-24 inches)
**0.5-6.8 kilograms** (1-15 pounds)

**General Population**

**Upper River**
- 30-35 cm | 12-14 in
- 35-70 cm | 14-28 in

**Lower River**
- 45-70 cm | 18-28 in
- > 70 cm | > 28 in

**Sensitive Population**

**Upper River**
- 30-35 cm | 12-14 in
- 35-50 cm | 14-20 in

**Lower River**
- 50-70 cm | 20-28 in
- DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE
Redhorse Sucker
*Moxostoma carinatum*

A species of “Special Concern” in Ontario (may become threatened or endangered).

- Large, thick-bodied sucker with a large, flat-topped head
- Yellowish-green or coppery sides
- Prominent snout
- White belly, brown or olive green back and brassy
- Red-tinted tail fin

**50-70 centimetres**
(20-30 inches)

**1.4 - 3 kilograms**
(3-7 pounds)

**GENERAL POPULATION**

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<td>22-28 in</td>
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Rock Bass
*Ambloplites rupestris*

A cool-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as sunfish, redeye, or rock perch.

- **Dorsal fin** has 10 to 13 spines.
- Back and upper sides are brown to olive, with golden tints, often with dark saddles.
- Mouth is large and extends backwards to below the middle of the eye.
- **Adults** have regular rows of spots along the side.
- Large, red eye.

**Size:** 15-20 centimetres (6-8 inches)

**Weight:** 0.2 kilograms (0.4 pounds)

**© Joseph Tomelleri**

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**General Population**

**Upper River**
- 15-25 cm | 6-10 in

**Lower River**
- 15-30 cm | 6-12 in

---

**Sensitive Population**

**Upper River**
- 15-25 cm | 6-10 in

**Lower River**
- 15-25 cm | 6-10 in
- 25-30 cm | 10-12 in
Smallmouth Bass

*Micropterus dolomieu*

A warm-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as smallie, brownie and brown bass.

- **25-50 centimetres** (10-20 inches)
- **0.5-1.6 kilograms** (1-3.5 pounds)

- **9 to 11 dorsal fin spines**
- **Green to olive back and sides**
- **Medium-sized, deep-bodied fish**
- **Upper jaw does not extend beyond eye**
- **Body often has dark vertical broken bars**
- **Yellow to white belly**

**General Population**

- **Upper River**
  - 15-45 cm | 6-18 in
  - 45-50 cm | 18-20 in

- **Lower River**
  - 20-30 cm | 8-12 in
  - 30-50 cm | 12-20 in

**Sensitive Population**

- **Upper River**
  - 15-35 cm | 6-14 in
  - 35-50 cm | 14-20 in

- **Lower River**
  - 20-30 cm | 8-12 in
  - 30-40 cm | 12-16 in
  - 40-50 cm | 16-20 in
Walleye
*Sander vitreus*

A cool-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as pickerel or yellow pickerel.

35-58 centimetres (14-23 inches)

0.68-1.36 kilograms (1.5-3 pounds)

Back is olive-green to brown; sides paler with yellow flecks

Spiny and soft dorsal fins separated

Large mouth extends below back edge of eye

Large, elongated fish

White tip on lower tail fin

© MECP

**GENERAL POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

No information currently available

**LOWER RIVER**

30-50 cm | 12-20 in

50-65 cm | 20-26 in

**SENSITIVE POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

No information currently available

**LOWER RIVER**

30-45 cm | 12-18 in

45-60 cm | 18-24 in

60-65 cm | 24-26 in

© MECP
White Bass

*Morone chrysops*

A warm-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as Silver Bass.

- Dark back with white sides and belly
- Dark spots in horizontal lines, often faint and irregular
- Silver-white to pale green
- Second anal spine distinctly shorter than third

20-30 centimetres (8-12 inches)

No information currently available

**General Population**

**Upper River**

- 30-40 cm | 12-16 in

**Lower River**

- 20-30 cm | 8-12 in

**Sensitive Population**

**Upper River**

- 30-40 cm | 12-16 in

**Lower River**

- 30-35 cm | 12-14 in

- DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE

© MECP
**White Perch**

*Morone chrysops*

A warm-water fish native to Ontario. Incorrectly called Silver Bass.

Second and third anal spine roughly equal in length

Generally silvery-white but colour is variable

**15-25 centimetres**

(6-10 inches)

No information currently available

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**GENERAL POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

15-30 cm | 6-12 in

30-35 cm | 12-14 in

**LOWER RIVER**

DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE

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**SENSITIVE POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

15-30 cm | 6-12 in

30-35 cm | 12-14 in

**LOWER RIVER**

DO NOT EAT ANY SIZE
White Sucker

*Catostomus commersonii*

A cool-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as a sucker, mullet, bay fish.

- Dark green, grey, copper, brown or black back and sides
- Torpedo-shaped
- Light underbelly

**30-50 centimetres**
(12-20 inches)

**No information currently available**

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**A cool-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as a sucker, mullet, bay fish.**

**30-50 centimetres**
(12-20 inches)

**No information currently available**

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**GENERAL POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

- 16-45 cm | 6-18 in
- 45-50 cm | 18-20 in

**LOWER RIVER**

- 25-50 cm | 10-20 in
- 50-55 cm | 20-22 in

**SENSITIVE POPULATION**

**UPPER RIVER**

- 15-45 cm | 6-18 in
- 45-50 cm | 18-20 in

**LOWER RIVER**

- 25-30 cm | 10-12 in
- 30-55 cm | 12-20 in
Yellow Perch
Perca flavescens
A cool-water fish native to Ontario. Also known as a lake perch or American perch.

- Light yellow body
- 6 to 8 dark, vertical bands on sides
- 2 separate dorsal fins
- Large mouth, extending to below the middle of the eye
- 15-30 centimetres (6-12 inches)
- 0.35 kilograms (0.75 pounds)

General Population

- Upper River:
  - 15-35 cm | 6-14 in
- Lower River:
  - 15-30 cm | 6-12 in

Sensitive Population

- Upper River:
  - 15-35 cm | 6-14 in
- Lower River:
  - 15-30 cm | 6-12 in
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Concept and design by Natalie Green and Paul Santos.

Additional Information

Fishing Rules & Regulations: www.ontario.ca/fishing
Guide to Eating Ontario Fish: www.ontario.ca/fishguide
Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca

If you have any questions about the amount of fish that is safe to eat, contact the Fish Contaminant Monitoring Program at 1-800-820-2716 (416-327-6816) or fishguide@ontario.ca.

To report pollution or a large number of dead fish, call Ontario’s Spills Action Centre at 1-800-268-6060.