

**TOP FISHING SECRETS****TOP FISHING SECRETS.COM****Preserving Saltwater Catches in the Field**

*How to keep your fish fresh without using a cooler or bag of ice*

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The stringer allows you to keep your fish alive and fresh while you continue to fish and you don't have to worry about leaving early for fear that your fish will go bad. The time between preparing each fish to the time that it takes to put it in the freezer assures that the catch will be the freshest it can be. There may come a time however, when you get to your favorite spot and realize that you forgot to take a stringer or cooler. It can happen. This quick set of tips is perfect for preserving catches without the aid of stringers and coolers.

If you are on shore, you should gill your fish right away. It is an action that involves the removal of gills from legally retained fish. Gilling allows the organs to evacuate unwanted blood for a better tasting food that is not as pungent or fishy tasting. This part of the processing of the fish makes for some of the best tasting fish you will ever eat.

Reach under the gill plate and insert two or three of your fingers around the gills. Twist your fingers back and forth in a semi-circular fashion. This action will release the gills. The time for the blood to evacuate the fish will vary by the size of the fish, but you should allow five to ten minutes for fish that are larger than eight pounds. Next, dig a shallow pit in the sand. The sand should be as close to the shoreline as possible. The moister the ground is, the better the preservation of the fish. The pit does not need to be deep; rather, it should be about half the width of the fish. Cover it with sand. Because the pit is shallow you will be able to spot the location of it without tipping it off to some other fisherman, or bird. The mound will identify the location of the fish, which is something only you will recognize. The moisture will keep it fresh and cool while you continue to fish.

If you are in a boat the procedure is just as simple. After you have gilled your fish, lay it in the bottom of the boat. There are a few things that you need to do in order for the fish to stay fresh. Find something to cover the fish so that any dehydration that may occur will be minimal. It is important that moisture be routinely applied to either the cover or the fish. Make sure to flip the fish over from side to side every half hour. Flipping it ensures that any residual blood that is left in the fish will not settle into the meat, thus making sure that your fish is still optimally fresh.

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Whether you are on shore or in a boat, if the trip home is more than a couple of hours you need to store it in a cooler or plastic bag, making sure to pack it in ice that you can pick up at just about any store.

It's entirely possible that you may find that these preservation techniques are better than lugging around coolers that need ice. it's possible.