



Drying fish on raised racks

Importance of fish

Fish and fish products play a very important role in food systems, both in rural and urban areas. While silver fish constitute a major source of protein, especially for vulnerable populations, its consumption is heavily affected by its availability, price and quality. Dried silver fish that look clean with a bright silver colour and are free from sand sell at a good price and are used for human consumption. Dried silver fish that are dull in colour and may be contaminated with sand or soil sell at a low price and are used for animal feed. Many people drying fish often lose fish because of spoilage or money as dried fish is sold for a low price as result of using methods that are not effective in maintaining the quality of the fish.



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Drying fish

One of the most used low-cost techniques of fish preservation is natural drying under the sun. This technique can work very well, especially for small fish like anchovies, sprats and sardines. There are several factors affecting the quality of sun-dried fish. These include the use of low quality fish, drying methods, weather conditions and the sanitation and cleanliness of processing areas. It is important to select and buy fish of good quality for drying. Using raised drying racks offers the best and cheapest option for natural drying of fish. To enable fish to dry properly, it is necessary for air to pass both over and below the fish. Traditional methods such as drying fish on the ground does not allow air to pass under the fish. Drying fish above the ground on raised racks allows drying from the upper and lower surfaces and produces good quality dryfish.

Using raised racks

It is important to locate drying racks on raised ground, away from low-lying swampy areas with a high relative humidity, to take maximum advantage of environmental and climatic conditions and ensure good air movement. Drying racks are constructed with metal or wooden stands raised about one metre from the ground and covered with food grade mesh. The mesh size should be small so the fish do not fall through. Fish placed on racks above the ground are less likely to be contaminated by dust or sand. Raised racks also protect the drying fish from stray animals. A plastic sheet can cover the fish in case of sudden rain.

Spread the fish on the rack to to dry. Turn the fish after a few hours. Drying small types of fish on racks can take 6 to 7 hours on a bright day. On a dull day, it will take longer



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