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Product development: Market depends on good processing

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Product Development

Market depends on good processing

Harvesting

Harvesting techniques are basically similar in all species in tropical countries while in temperate countries, winter season is given serious thought..

As winter season approaches the water temperature in the pond decreases, the carp stops feeding. The carp farmer then must prepare for harvesting considering also that carps are usually sold live. Prepare and check protective clothing, nets and holding tanks. Discuss with prospective costumers estimated time of delivery. If ponds are large, pre-netting is advisable for partial harvesting so some of the fish will already be sold before the pond is finally emptied.

It is relatively easy to harvest the rest of the pond; slowly drain the pond until the fish are in the catch-pit. The fish should then be removed by hand netting and transferred to oxygenated transport tanks. Harvesting must take place when the water temperature and air temperature are more or less constant, fluctuations should exceed 2°C either way. More drastic changes than this are stressful to the fish.

Handling and processing

Fish producers recognize that the quality of the end product is as important as quantity making processing and marketing as important factors in any aquaculture industry. Carps like any other fish have to be processed to be attractive to the consumer considering that the fish have a lower commercial value than other species. Their bone structure makes them difficult to fillet.

Good processing produces whole carps and fillets with high quality at a reasonable price for consumers.

Water quality is important during the final stage of harvest

and during transportation to the processing plant because it can affect the hygienic and organoleptic quality of the fish.

In Western Europe small quantities of carps are sent regularly from the farms to processing plants so that the market is continuously supplied.

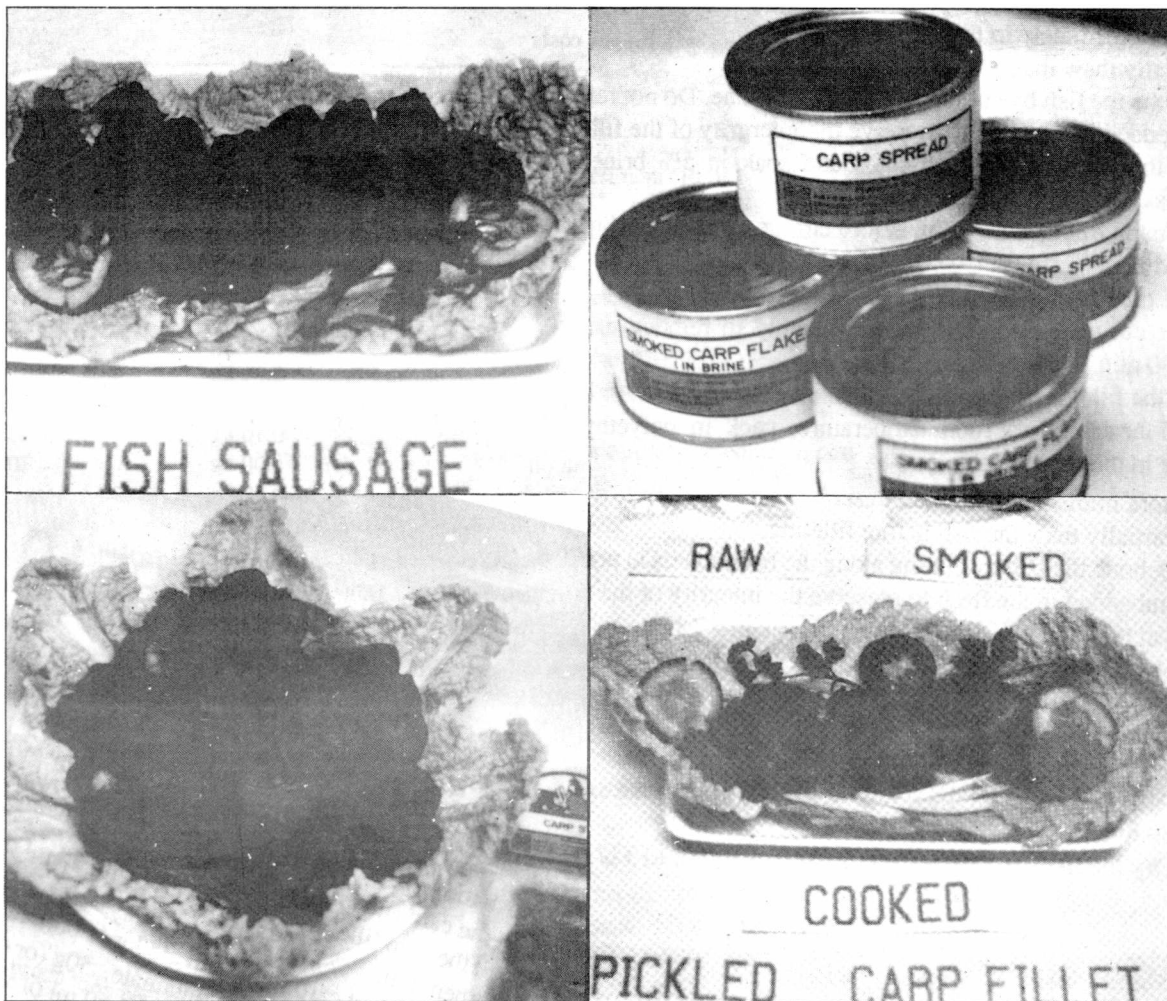
Carps are still traditionally sold live in the market and so they are harvested, sorted, stored and transported carefully. *Chinese carps are more fragile than common carp and require extra care.*

In the Philippines, common carp is usually filleted, cut into sticks, frozen, and used as breaded sticks. They are also bottled and canned in tomato sauce. Non-traditional smoked products like kippered dry-cured, cold-smoked ham, hot-smoked steaks, salami and sausages are developed from bighead carp. There is a standard procedure deboning of carp fillet similar to that of milkfish.

Convenience food products from bighead carp, the "ready to cook foods" are in great demand. They are prepared for fish sticks, fish spread, fish flakes, (plain and salted), fish powder (smoked and unsalted), smoked fish fillet, pickled smoked carp, ham-cured carp fillets and fish sausage.



Carps are usually sold live in the market



Products from bighead carp

Preserving carp at home

Common carp (*Cyprinus carpio* L.), like any other fishes can be processed and stored for future use without changing its flavor, texture, and freshness. You can do this, by drying, smoking, wrapping in plastic bags and freezing.

Before drying however, soak the choice cuts of the fish in brine solution with spices for at least two hours.

You can also prepare the fish by pickling before drying. On drying, place the fish in a tray and expose under the sun for at least one day. Or you can use an artificial drier to remove the excess water from the fish's meat.

The fish is then smoked for about one and one-half to two hours until the skin turns brown.

After smoking, wrap the fish in plastic bags; then store in a freezer. This treatment preserves the fish for at least 128 days. If stored in refrigerating temperature, however, it will last only for 28 days. Carp intended for the table market should be held for 2-3 days in storage tanks which have a flow of water running through, this cleans their intestines and gills.

Sources: Billard, R. *The major carps and other cyprinids*. In: *Production of Aquatic animals: Fishes*. Nash, C.E. and A.C. Navotny. 1995. Amsterdam Elsevier. p. 21-54. *World Animal Science*, 8. (2) Michaels, V.K. 1988. *Carp fishing*. Farnham & Fishing News Books. 207 p. (3) *Times Journal*. June 1, 1976, p 17. (4) *Processing of bighead carp into food products*. Fisheries Technology Manual Series. No. 10. August 1991. Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines.