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Troll-caught Albacore Tuna Boasts Heart-Healthy Omega-3s

SAN DIEGO / EUREKA, Calif. (August 21, 2003) – Seafood aficionados and discerning chefs have a secret that many health-conscious consumers don't know. It's that familiar diet food tuna, but it's not just any tuna. The secret is troll-caught albacore tuna, whose short seasonal catch runs from July through October in the Pacific Northwest.

Sought after by chefs for its richer flavor and loaded with heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, troll-caught albacore from the cold Pacific waters are a health find, either fresh or canned. In fact, according to recent scientific analysis, cold water troll-caught albacore tuna offers two to three times the amount of heart-protecting omega-3 fatty acids as albacore from the warmer waters of the South tropical Pacific.

So, why does location make a difference to how much healthy oils are in tuna? "Troll-caught albacore tuna, caught one at a time, are smaller and younger than the albacores caught in warmer South tropical Pacific waters," explained John LaGrange, fisherman and president of the American Fishermen's Research Foundation. "In the cold northern waters, troll-caught tuna have more protective fat, in this case the heart-healthy kind," LaGrange said.

The American Heart Association recommends eating two servings of fish a week, preferably of fatty fish. Troll-caught tuna joins the short list of fish – including salmon, sardines, and rainbow trout – that are especially high in omega-3s. According to Joyce Nettleton, D.Sc., seafood nutrition expert and author of *Omega-3 Fatty Acids and Health*, research from the past 30 years reveals that people who consume fish regularly have significantly lower risk of heart disease and death compared with non-fish eaters. "Omega-3s in fish improve the electrical stability of the heart," she explained. "That makes abnormal heart rhythms – a cause of sudden death – much less likely." Eating fish regularly can reduce the chance of stroke, improve blood lipid levels, make blood vessels function better, and contribute to other valuable heart-protective activities. As Nettleton pointed out, these health benefits make troll-caught albacore tuna a wise choice for people seeking to improve their health and their diets.

Differences in oil content appear on the nutrition labels of canned product where weight-conscious dieters have habitually looked for the lowest-fat tuna on the supermarket shelf. But, says Nettleton, dieters are missing the point. “In addition to unbelievable flavor, they’re missing out on the vital omega-3s that a few extra calories would give them,” she noted.

Troll-caught albacore is packed in the United States almost exclusively by specialty processors who can the meat using a process that retains without first removing the natural fat. So, although the total fat content is higher than common canned albacore or “white meat” tuna, the desirable omega-3 content is up to three times higher in troll-caught albacore tuna. Fish packed as “light meat” tuna include different species of tuna that are rich in protein but offer little fat or omega-3s after they have been processed.

There’s one catch to this healthy tuna catch – finding troll-caught albacore may take a little line work – online! Consumers can find sources and ordering information for the healthful delicacy at www.albatuna.com. Brand name U.S. canners sometimes pack troll-caught albacore in cans or pouch-packs. It can be identified by the nutrition label with “3 grams fat/serving” in contrast to the usual “1 gram” of fat.

About the American Fishermen’s Research Foundation

The American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF) was founded in 1971 to aid, encourage, promote, and support science and education in the field of albacore and related fish species. It is a nonprofit corporation organized under the General Non-Profit Corporation Law of the State of California and is tax-exempt.

The AFRF is a unique fishery research foundation funded entirely by the U.S. and Canadian albacore troll fishery. Funding comes from tonnage delivered to AFRF contracted buyers, individual vessels and alternate market sales.

The AFRF works in close cooperation with the National Marine Fisheries Service/National Oceanic and Aeronautic Administration and major universities, which contribute technical expertise in an advisory capacity. NMFS, when necessary, supplies scientific equipment and personnel for vessels under charter to the AFRF.

Tuna processor representatives, other albacore buyers, and representatives from the Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA) comprise the AFRF board of directors. For more information, visit AFRF on the web at <http://www.afrf.org/>.

*Written by Joyce A. Nettleton, DSc, RD, ScienceVoice Consulting, Denver, CO.
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