



United States Standards for Grades of Flounder and Sole Fillets

Description of the product

Frozen flounder and sole fillets consist of clean, wholesome fillets processed and frozen in accordance with good commercial practice and maintained at temperatures necessary for their preservation. The fillets may be cut transversely or longitudinally into subunits.

Note: This standard does not provide for the grading of units of fish flesh cut from previously frozen fish blocks, slabs, or similar material.

The product covered by this standard is prepared from the following species only:

Sole

- Dover sole (*Microstomus pacificus*).
- English sole (*Parophrys vetulus*).
- Gray sole (*Glyptocephalus cynoglossus*).
- Petrale sole (*Eopsetta jordani*).
- Lemon sole (*Pseudopleuronectes americanus*, over 3½ pounds).
- Rock sole (*Lepidopsetta bilineata*).
- Sand sole (*Psettichthys melanostictus*).

Flounder

- Blackback (*Pseudopleuronectes americanus*, less than 3½ pounds).
- Yellowtail flounder (*Limanda ferruginea*).
- Dab, plaice (*Hippoglossoides platessoides*).
- Fluke (*Paralichthys dentatus*).
- Starry flounder (*Platichthys stellatus*).

The product may contain bones when it is clearly labeled on the principal display panel to show that the product contains bones.

[42 FR 52756, Sept. 30, 1977, as amended at 55 FR 23551, June 11, 1990]

Product forms.

(a) Types:

- (1) Fresh,
- (2) Frozen solid packs; glazed or unglazed,
- (3) Frozen individually; glazed or unglazed.

(b) Styles:

- (1) Skin on,
- (2) Skin on, white side only,
- (3) Skinless



(c) *Bone classification.*

- (1) Practically boneless fillet.
- (2) Bone-in (fillet cut, with bones.)

[42 FR 52756, Sept. 30, 1977, as amended as 55 FR 23551, June 11, 1990]

Grades of frozen flounder and sole fillets.

(a) “U.S. Grade A” is the quality of frozen flounder or sole fillets for which the total score is not less than 85 points, when the fillets are rated in accordance with the scoring system outlined in the following sections.

(b) “U.S. Grade B” is the quality of frozen flounder or sole fillets for which the total score is less than 85 points but is not less than 70 points, when the fillets are rated in accordance with the scoring system outlined in the following sections.

(c) “Substandard” is the quality of frozen flounder or sole fillets that fail to meet the requirements of the U.S. Grade B.

Determination of the grade.

The grade is determined by observing the product in the frozen, thawed, and cooked states and is evaluated by numerical scoring. Points are deducted for variations of quality for each factor in accordance with the schedule in Table 1. The total of the points deducted is subtracted from 100 to obtain the score. The maximum score is 100; the minimum score is 0.

Definitions.

(a) “Slight” refers to a condition that is scarcely noticeable but that does affect the appearance, desirability, and/or eating quality of the fillets.

(b) “Moderate” refers to a condition that is conspicuously noticeable but that does not seriously affect the appearance, desirability, and/or, eating quality of the fillets.

(c) “Excessive” refers to a condition that is conspicuously noticeable and that does seriously affect the appearance, desirability and/or eating quality of the fillets.

(d) “Bones normally removed” refers to (1) nape membrane bones (adjacent to visceral cavity) and to (2) radial bones (adjacent to fins and lace area). In fillets intended to contain bones, to presence of bones will not be considered a workmanship defect.

(e) “Determined by grid” means that a transparent grid of 1-inch squares is placed over the defect area, and points are deducted (as specified in Table 1) for each square of affected area under the grid, each square being counted as one whether it is full or fractional.



(f) “Thawed state” means that the frozen product has been placed within a film-type pouch and warmed to an internal temperature of about 32°F by immersing the pouch in running tap water of about 50° to 70°F. Thawing time usually takes 25 to 45 minutes for a 1-pound package.

(g) “Cooked state” means that the thawed, unseasoned product has been placed within a boilable film-type pouch and heated to an internal temperature of about 160°F by immersing the pouch in boiling water. Cooking time usually ranges from 3 to 5 minutes for single fillets and from 7 to 10 minutes for 1-pound package of fillets.

(h) “Actual net weight” means the weight of the fish flesh within the package after all packaging material, ice glaze, or other protective coating have been removed. (“Actual net weight” of frozen glazed fillets is determined as follows:

- (1) Rapidly remove excessive ice layers or pockets with running tap water or nozzle-type water spray.
- (2) Rapidly thaw remaining surfaces of frozen fish sufficiently with tap water or spray to prevent refreezing free surface water.
- (3) Gently wipe off all free water with a moisture saturated paper towel.
- (4) Weigh the fish to obtain “actual net weight”.)

(i) “Abnormal condition” means that the normal physical and/or chemical structure of the fish flesh has been sufficiently altered so that the usability and/or desirability of the fillet is adversely affected. It includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- (1) “Jellied” refers to the abnormal condition wherein a fillet is partly or wholly characterized by a gelatinous glossy, translucent appearance, feels slimy to the touch, and retains its gelatinous, slimy properties in the cooked state.
- (2) “Milky” refers to the abnormal condition wherein a fillet is partly or wholly characterized by a milky-white, excessively mushy, pasty, or fluidized appearance.
- (3) “Chalky” refers to the abnormal condition wherein a fillet is partly or wholly characterized by a dry, chalky granular appearance and fiberless structure.

(j) “Odor and flavor” is classified as follows:

- (1) “Very good”: Fish in this category have essentially the full, good, typical odor, and flavor of the indicated species.
- (2) “Good”: Fish in this category show a noticeable decrease of the good typical odor and flavor of the indicated species, and/or may have certain less acceptable natural environmental odors and flavors of slight intensity (iodoform-type, phenolic-type, feed type, etc.), but may have no off odors and flavors.
- (3) “Reasonably good”: Fish in this category may be flat, or completely lacking in the good, typical odor and flavor of the indicated species, and/or may have certain less acceptable natural environmental odors and flavors of moderate intensity (iodoform-type, phenolic-type, feed-type, etc.), but may have no objectionable odors and flavors.
- (4) “Substandard”: Fish in this category have odors and flavors that are objectionable.

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Tolerances for certification of officially drawn samples

The sample rate and grades of specific lots shall be certified in accordance with Part 260, Subpart A of this chapter (Regulations Governing Processed Fishery Products).

TABLE 1 -SCHEDULE OF POINT DEDUCTIONS PER POUND OF FLOUNDER OR SOLE FILLETS AND GRADING SCORE SHEET

Scored factors	Description of quality variation	Deduct
Frozen		
1. Appearance ¹	Adversely affected by imbedded packaging material, voids, depressions, surface irregularity, and poor arrangements of fillets:	
	Slight.....	2
	Moderate.....	4
	Excessive.....	10
2. Dehydration ²	For each inch square (determined by grid) of affected area:	
	Color masking, easily scraped off	1/2
	Deep, not easily scraped off	1
Thawed		
3. Weights ²	a) For each fillet or piece less than 1 oz., except first fillet or piece	5
	b) For sole only: For each fillet from 1-2 oz., except first fillet	2
	For flounder only: For each fillet from 1-2 oz., except first three fillets	2
4. Workmanship defects ²	For each inch square (determined by grid) of affected area:	
	a) Cutting and trimming (ragged edges holes, tears, improper or unnecessary cuts and lace).....	1/2
	b) Blemishes (belly lining, blood spots, bruises, extraneous material, fins, discolored pugh marks, scales and skin)	2
	c) Bones normally removed	3
5. Color ¹	a) Deteriorative discoloration (yellowing of fatty portion and/or darkening of light portion)	
	Slight	2
	Moderate	5
	Excessive	15
	b) Nonuniformity of color (natural color differences within package due to packing fish of contrasting color)	
	Moderate	3
Excessive	5	
6. Abnormal condition ¹	Usability and/or desirability of fillets impaired by abnormal conditions (jellied, milky, chalky):	
	Moderate	16
	Excessive	31
Cooked		
7. Texture ¹	Tough, dry, fibrous, or watery for species involved:	
	Slight	4
	Moderate	8
	Excessive	15
8. Odor and Flavor ¹	Very good: Full typical odor and flavor of fresh fish	-
	Good: Noticeable decrease in typical odor and flavor of fresh fish	6
	Reasonably good: Lacking typical odor and flavor of fresh fish, but not objectionable.....	16
	Substandard: Objectionable odor and/or flavor.....	31

¹Overall assessment

²Per pound assessment



Total deductions

Score (100 minus total deductions)

Grade (100 to 85=Grade A; 84 to 70=Grade B; 69 and below=Substandard)

Label.....

Actual net weight lb.....oz

Size of lot.....

Size and kind of container.....

Size of sample.

Container mark or identification.....

Number of packages per master carton.....

Type of overwrap

Remarks