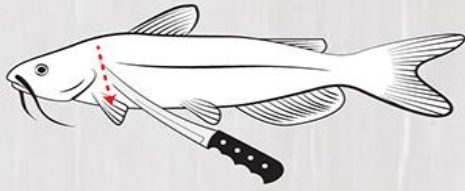
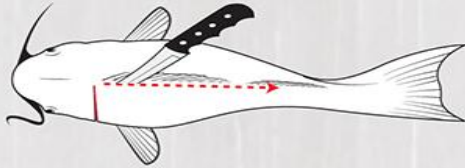


FILLET TECHNIQUE FOR CATFISH

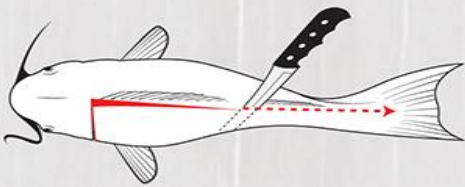
BLUE, CHANNEL,
FLATHEAD, LARGER
BULLHEADS



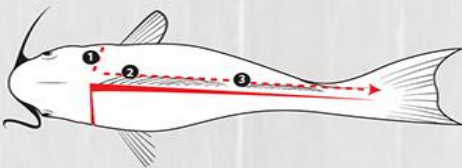
1 | Hold the catfish's head down against the board with your gloved hand. Catfish have a round profile, so holding them securely in place can be tricky. Be careful and avoid the spines in their fins. With the curved portion of the blade, a couple of inches back from the tip, make a cut from above the top of the gill plate down and back on a straight line that comes behind the pectoral fin. Make the cut in one slice, pulling the knife handle back toward you. Use care not to cut through the backbone, only down to it.



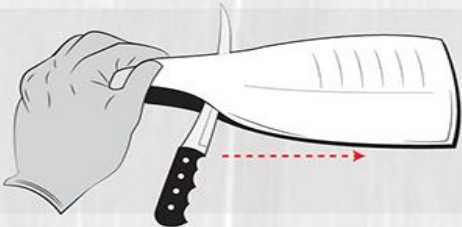
2 | Insert the knife into the top of the fish perpendicular to the top of your first cut, being sure to stay on the same side of the backbone. Use the fins as a guide for a straight cut. Slice back toward the rear of the catfish down to the top of the rib cage, but not through it. Carefully feel the tip of the knife bouncing across the top of each rib.



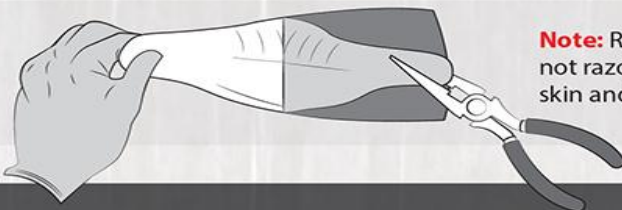
3 | At the back of the rib cage, push the knife all the way through the catfish and continue cutting using the backbone as a guide. You can either (A) cut all the way back to separate the fillet or (B) stop short, and with the fillet still attached, fold the fillet back on the cutting surface with the skin acting as a hinge. (You may wish to do this on larger catfish or ones that have been dead for a while as the skin on these is more difficult to remove.)



4 | (A) If you've separated the fillet, flip the catfish over and repeat on the process on the other side. (B) If you've left the fillet attached, use the fish itself for a grip and slide the knife between the skin and the flesh. This is where the extremely sharp, flexible blade of the fillet knife is critical. Flexing the blade so it is flat with the skin and the cutting board, slide the knife toward the front of the fillet separating it from the skin. Then flip the catfish over and repeat the process on the other side.



5 | With the two skin-on fillets separated from the catfish, lay a fillet skin side down on the cutting board. Hold the tail or the very back edge of the fillet with your off hand, and carefully slide the edged of the knife between the flesh and the skin. Flexing the blade so it is flat with the skin and the cutting board, slide the knife toward the front of the fillet separating it from the skin.



Note: Removing skin from catfish can be difficult. If your knife is not razor sharp, an alternative method is to use pliers to grasp the skin and peel it away from the fillets.

EQUIPMENT

CUTTING BOARD - the bigger the better. Surface should be smooth to allow for easiest skinning and cleaning.

VACUUM SEALER - for any fillets you're not going to cook and eat immediately, vacuum sealing is by far the best way to preserve quality in the freezer for the longest time.

TRASH RECEPTACLE - for offal.

FILLET KNIFE - must have a flexible blade that will hold its edge. Grip of hard material such as wood, plastic, etc. is desirable as it provides the best feel. Some filleting techniques especially require "feel" which soft grips inhibit. Shorter blades are also more sensitive, but for filleting it's better to have a blade that's too long rather than too short; 8- to 10-inch blades are most common.

FILLETING GLOVE - the same kind of glove used in commercial meat processing prevents nicks and cuts to the off hand and enhances grip on slippery fish and fillets.

SOURCES:

PAUL POWIS, BASS PRO SHOPS, THUNDERMIST LURES