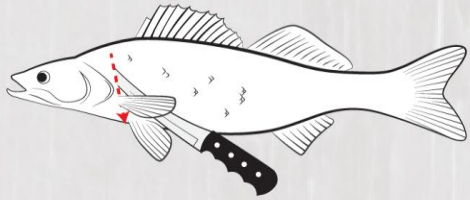
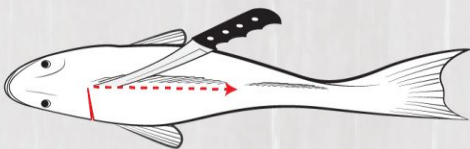


FILLET TECHNIQUE FOR PANFISH

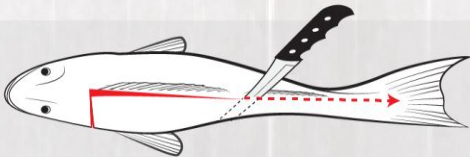
BASS,
PERCH &
CRAPPIE



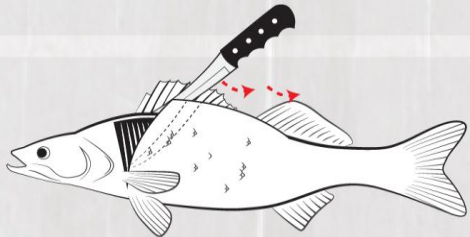
1 | Hold the fish's head down against the board with your gloved off hand. With the curved portion of the blade, a couple of inches back from the knife tip, make a cut from above the top of the gill plate down and back on a straight line that comes behind the pectoral fin. Make the cut in one slice, pulling the knife handle back toward you. Use care not to cut through the backbone, just down to it.



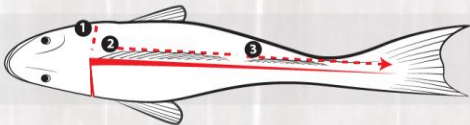
2 | Insert the knife about an inch into the top of the fish perpendicular to the top of your first cut, being sure to stay on the same side of the backbone. Slice back toward the rear of the fish down to the top of the rib cage, but not through it. Use the dorsal fin as a guide and carefully feel the tip of the knife bouncing across the top of each rib.



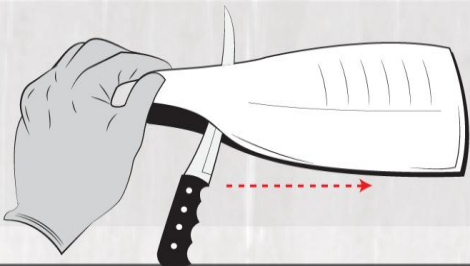
3 | At the back of the rib cage, push the knife all the way through the fish and continue cutting, using the backbone as a guide, all the way through the fish's tail. The sign of the "perfect" cut is part of the tail will come away with this fillet, and part will be left attached to the fillet on the other side of the fish.



4 | With your off hand, lift the top of the fillet away from the backbone, and using the curved portion of the blade, carve the fillet away from the fish following down along the outside of the ribs. Work toward the fish's belly. The resulting fillet should be boneless. If you accidentally cut through a rib, just carve it out from the fillet.



5 | Flip the fish over and repeat steps 1-2-3 on the other side.



6 | 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 edge of the knife between the flesh and the skin. This is where the sharp, flexible blade of the 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.

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 entrails.

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