

Press Release, March 10, 2022,

SENA Launch: Sustainable Wild Atlantic Scup for Food Service (frozen skinless/boneless fillets) – A New England Community responds to demand for local, healthy, and wild-caught sustainable seafood.

Wild Atlantic scup, or porgy, is a familiar sight in harbors and regional fine dining venues where it is typically served whole roasted or grilled. The [New York Times](#) featured this tasty underutilized fish in August, 2021. Whole fish form, however, does not fit the requirements of most large-scale US seafood retailers, institutions, and consumers. Ingenuity and 5 years of testing new techniques later, a refreshed boneless and skinless scup fillet will be launched at the Boston Seafood Expo 2022. Persistence and a community-based initiative made it possible. Led by the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) with the culinary arts program at Johnson and Wales University, J.B. Cuisine and Pier Fish Company, with funding from a NOAA Saltonstall-Kennedy grant, have succeeded in making an underutilized East Coast fishery commercially viable. Considerable R&D led to success with vacuum sealed frozen fillets. This breakthrough is worth celebrating. The Pier Fish/CFRF booth will showcase 5 and 10 lb cases of vacuum sealed frozen boneless and skinless fillets.



CFRF developed a scup fillet concept after their previous research revealed that large institutions, including Rhode Island hospitals and universities, have the desire to utilize more local seafood and could easily incorporate scup if it was available at an affordable price. From both biological and fishery perspectives, Wild Atlantic Scup represents a healthy seafood resource that is suitable for expanded harvest. Previously under a stock rebuilding strategy, the fishery was declared rebuilt in 2009 (MAFMC 2014). The 2021 scup stock assessment found that scup is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring relative to biological reference points (ASMFC 2022). The 2020 Commercial Annual Catch Limit for scup was 27.9 million pounds, but the commercial landings for that year were only 13.58 million pounds (MAFMC 2021). This trend of under-harvesting scup has been persistent for years and resulted in scup being classified as an underutilized species. Limited demand for whole fish had resulted in unpredictable, and often unprofitable, ex-vessel prices, leading to minimal effort in the scup fishery.



CFRF set a goal to raise the fishery's standing in the US market for sustainable seafood and to raise ex-vessel prices to a level that would incentivize fishermen to target scup, leading to benefits for fishing businesses in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, as well as seafood consumers nationwide. Several rounds of test filleting, freezing, tasting and analyses were supported by the JWU culinary arts program and Pier Fish Company. CFRF also began preparations for a Fishery Improvement Project with Sustainability Incubator and the fishery was assessed preliminarily against the MSC standard in early 2019. As a well-managed fishery, it scored 100 on stock, primary species management, secondary species information,

and 80 on every other indicator. Fishermen report that scup are readily available year-round, with inshore harvest from May to November and offshore harvest from December to April. Sustainable Wild Atlantic Scup offers a much-needed option for fishermen forced to shift away from depleted groundfish and a historic Made-In-USA option for grocers and food service.

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