

FARMERS MARKETS



Handling Seafood

Seafood is highly perishable. Just like other high-risk food, it is essential to handle seafood safely to prevent foodborne illnesses. Some of the items sold in farmers markets include live seafood, such as crustaceans, oysters, crawfish and shellfish, as well as raw and frozen fish, crustaceans and alligators.

Licenses and permits for seafood sales

Any individual or business that buys, acquires or handles any species of seafood for sale or resale in Louisiana is considered a wholesale/retail seafood dealer. Fish and seafood should come from approved sources. All operators and drivers of commercial vehicles that are loading, unloading or carrying seafood must have one of the following certifications:

- Seafood vendors should have a Commercial Fisherman License and a Fresh Products License if they are selling or transporting their own catch to wholesale/retail seafood dealers.
- If they are not selling their own catch, they need to have a Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License to carry out sales from a fixed business location or a vehicle.
- You may sell seafood raw or processed. However, you will need a specific permit to operate if you plan on processing anything, including cleaning, shucking, picking, peeling or packing. For this, you must register with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and complete a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan. The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) oversees these projects on behalf of the FDA.

Transporting seafood

- Fresh seafood should be stored between 30 F and 32 F, while frozen seafood should be stored between -10 F and -20 F to maintain product quality and safety.
- A designated storage carrier, transportation truck or cooler must be used to maintain the optimum storage temperature.
- Make sure the refrigeration systems on a refrigerated van, truck or coolers are working properly and have been precooled to transport temperature before loading.
- The temperature should be maintained and monitored properly along the route of transportation.

Packaging and storing seafood

All of the seafood and seafood products should arrive at the market pre-packed.

- Fish and seafood products must be sold frozen or kept refrigerated at a temperature of 40 F or less.
- Mechanical refrigeration is the primary method of temperature control because it ensures consistent storage conditions and temperature. Coolers with ice can also be used to maintain the refrigeration

temperature ensuring that the temperature does not go beyond the requirements.

- Vacuum sealing is one of the greatest packing methods for retaining freshness in the seafood sector, and it is also one of the easiest to use. A vacuum seal allows all the air in a package to be evacuated. By excluding the air, bacteria cannot thrive, keeping the fish fresher for longer.

Note: There are some anaerobic pathogenic bacteria that can thrive without the presence of oxygen. To prevent this risk, make sure that the seafood is refrigerated prior to vacuum sealing. Additionally, vacuum-sealed food should be kept in the freezer or refrigerator.

Preparation of seafood for sale

- Keep the seafood refrigerated or frozen until you are ready to prepare it.
- Thaw the meat inside the refrigerator, in chilly water or in the microwave.
- Keep seafood separate from other items during preparation and while in the refrigerator.
- Cook fish to an internal temperature of 145 F or until meat is opaque and easily separates with a fork.
- Cook shrimp, lobster, crab and scallops until the flesh is opaque and pearly white.
- Cook seafood, such as clams, oysters and mussels, until their shells open.
- Chill the cooked food quickly to prevent the growth of bacteria if you do not plan to serve immediately. Divide large quantities of food into smaller parts or spread them out in a shallow container to speed up the chilling process.
- If you are serving hot food, make sure it stays at 140 F or above. If the food is served or sold cold, it should be at 40 F and below.

Reference

Louisiana Fisheries Forward, (2022). Louisiana Seafood Dealers & Processors. Dealers and Processors. Retrieved from <https://www.lafisheriesforward.org/dealers-processors/>

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