

Since before anyone can remember, shrimp have been an important part of Mississippi's coastal development. These delicacies from the deep were perhaps first caught by the American Indians, who in turn, taught the early French settlers to harvest shrimp in the shallow nearshore waters.

Grab your gear!

The majority of Mississippi's commercial shrimpers use a single trawl behind the traditional boat, the Biloxi lugger. Since 1950, however, "double-rigged" trawling systems have been a popular net arrangement.

This system, using two instead of one outrigger and boards to spread the nets, tows two otter trawls. The two trawls are set at different lengths behind the boat to prevent fouling. Recently, as many as four nets have been towed by these boats in offshore waters in an effort to increase harvest and meet the growing demand for shrimp.

But, modern techniques are of no use if there are no shrimp. Fortunately, Mississippi is located in an area ideal for shrimp production. Our tidal wetlands provide the rich nursery grounds necessary for growing shrimp.

Know Your Catch

Brown, white and pink shrimp are the three major types of shrimp commercially and recreationally harvested, with brown shrimp being predominant. The shrimp's life cycle involves a variety of changes from larvae to juvenile, to adult. The biological life cycles of the three species are similar, but their developmental stages occur during different seasons of the year.

Shrimp are considered an annual crop, although some may live longer than one year. Adult shrimp spawn offshore in salty waters in depths ranging from 30-240 feet. Male shrimp place spermatophores on the underside of the female. As the female lays her eggs, they are fertilized. One shrimp can lay more than a million eggs. The eggs slowly sink in the water and hatch within 24 hours.



Seafood factory employees work hard to select the best shrimp.

The DMR takes shrimp samples to determine the opening of shrimp season.



For two to three weeks, shrimp go through many developmental stages. As larvae, shrimp are carried toward the estuaries by favorable currents, wind and tides.

Shrimp then develop into postlarvae, resembling tiny adult shrimp. During this stage they begin to swim toward the less salty, inland areas. In the warm, shallow, brackish waters of the estuaries, shrimp change from postlarval to juvenile shrimp. These protected waters offer the shrimp a safer place to feed and grow.

When shrimp are four to six months old, they seek deeper, saltier water. Their life cycle is completed when the adult shrimp return to offshore waters to spawn.

Did you know?

Brown shrimp are most abundant from June to October. They congregate in water between 15-120 feet deep and are caught mostly at night. About 85 percent of Mississippi's harvest is brown shrimp.

Found in shallow water, usually no deeper than 90 feet, white shrimp are caught mostly during daylight hours. October to January are the best months to fish for white shrimp.

Pink shrimp are usually found in waters 36-108 feet deep. They are usually caught at night. Pink shrimp seem to be most abundant between October and April with the highest abundance in April.

Water temperature, salinity, available food, water quality and habitat affect the size of the shrimp harvest. If the water is too fresh, shrimp will not enter the estuaries and will not be afforded the protection of marsh vegetation.

If they have already arrived when excessive fresh waters flow into these areas, large numbers may be killed by the sudden decrease in salinity. If the water gets too salty or cold, growth will slow down or stop. Best seasons occur when water conditions in the spring are warm and brackish.

Dockside value of Mississippi's annual shrimp harvest averages approximately \$28 million. Mississippi's annual commercial shrimp landings average approximately 16 million pounds. In recent years, a rise in the amount of foreign shrimp being imported into the U.S. has caused the price to decrease. However, Gulf of Mexico shrimp landed in Mississippi continue to be a fresher, higher quality and better tasting choice. Be sure to ask for Gulf of Mexico shrimp when purchasing from the market or dining out.



Regulations*

Because of the demands placed on shrimp resources and the variety of environmental conditions, regulations are designed to ensure adequate protection of the resource. Regulations include seasons, count size of shrimp, size and number of trawls towed by boats and closing of specific nursery areas to shrimping. License fees, taxes and fines are other means of regulating shrimp harvest.



The shrimp industry has been an extremely vital part of Mississippi's coastal development. The future of this industry and the people employed by it demand that we maintain an environment which continues to sustain the habitat for the shrimp we catch. Through wetlands conservation and seafood regulations, the future harvest of shrimp should be ensured.

All recreational and commercial shrimp vessels with a power retrieval system must have a Turtle Excluder Device (TED).

Trawling is generally not permitted in any area within one half-mile of the mainland, except by duly licensed live bait dealers.

Trawling is not permitted north of the Intracoastal Waterway (tugboat channel) after sunset on December 31. The area south of the Intracoastal Waterway will be closed to trawling after April 30 of each year and prior to the opening of the shrimp season (special extensions may be made by the Commission on Marine Resources pending sampling findings).

Regulations continued...

Recreational

Recreationally harvested shrimp cannot be sold.

Recreational brail (brill) nets not exceeding 12 feet maximum radius may be used to catch up to 50 pounds of shrimp (heads-on) per person, per day in coastal rivers and streams south of Interstate 10. Persons catching shrimp with cast nets or brail nets shall not remove the heads of shrimp on site.

Holders of a recreational shrimp trawling license are limited to the use of a single net measuring no larger than 16 feet along the headrope.

Commercial

During open seasons and in open areas, salt-water shrimp may only be taken with shrimp trawls, butterfly nets, skimmer nets, push trawls, beach seines and cast nets. Shrimp may be taken using the above gear south of a line formed by the barrier islands of Cat, Ship, Horn and Petit Bois. North of this line, that is within Mississippi Sound, shrimp may only be taken with a single net measuring no larger than 50 feet along the headrope and 60 feet along the footrope or not more than two nets, each measuring no more than 25 feet on the headrope and 32 feet on the footrope. A test (or try) trawl no longer than 12 feet along the headrope and 15 feet along the footrope used with boards not more than 30 inches in length is permitted.

It is unlawful to use skimmer trawls or wing nets with a maximum size greater than 25 feet on the headrope and 32 feet on the footrope.

***For more information and specific regulations, please contact:**

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Gone Shrimping



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**Mississippi Department
of Marine Resources**