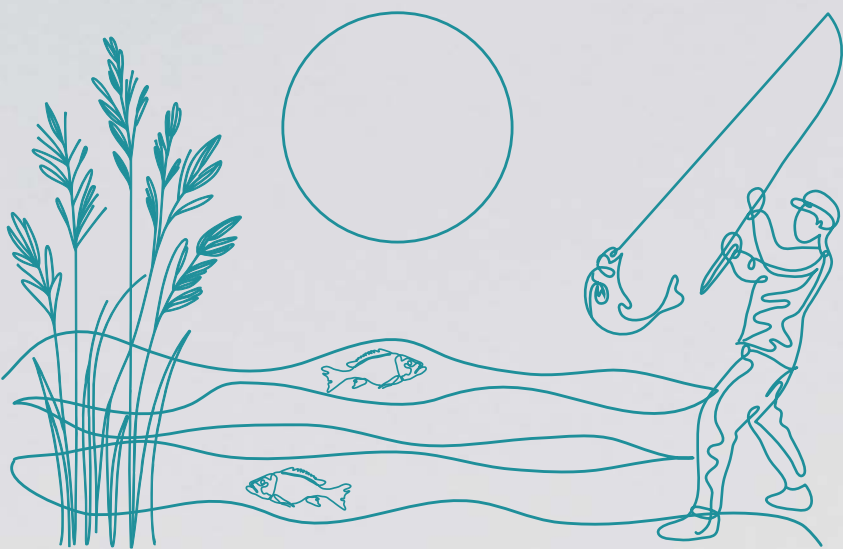




Fish recipes from the wetlands of Namibia



FRESHWATER &
INLAND FISHERIES

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Author: NNF Freshwater and Fisheries Team
Edited by: Silvanus Nuuyuni, Allen Jiji and Britta Hackenberg, with thanks to the rest of the team
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Introduction

Kofi Anan, the retired UN-SG once stressed the importance of appropriate nutrition: “One of Africa’s challenges is not just malnutrition, but rather the shortfall of micro-nutrients because of insufficient fish resources, affecting the development of mental faculties and being a productive society” (2014).

Micronutrient deficiency is indeed a significant issue in Namibia, particularly along the Kavango and Zambezi Rivers. A lack of a balanced diet often results in deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals, known as a nutritional void, which can lead to many preventable diseases. Namibian children frequently suffer from deficiencies in vitamin B₂, B₃, B₉, calcium, and iron. Freshwater fish, especially the small-sized species, can be a crucial source of these nutrients. Ensuring a diverse and balanced diet, including nutrient-rich foods like freshwater fish, can help fill this void and promote better health outcomes.

The vast wetlands in the north of Namibia with the mighty Zambezi, the secretive Kavango and the smaller Kwando/Linyanti/Chobe provide a plethora of fish and wild food; however, many of the traditional cooking styles and recipes are vanishing. To preserve the traditional knowledge on local food but also to encourage to continue developing new recipe, this booklet was developed. In addition, this booklet celebrates local communities and acknowledges their culture, values and their food.

Local is lekker!



Kavango Region



For fish to taste good, it should be cooked in a traditional pot with reeds placed underneath.

Take your pot and place the dry reeds beneath the fish, then add water, salt, and oil and cook for 2-3 hours (Tilapia species), 4-5 hours (catfish), and 1 hour (tigerfish).

Catfish



After catching the fish, you clean it and wash the fish with lukewarm water.

Allow the water to drip off the fish before cutting it into small pieces.

The fish is cooked in a pot by placing it on top of reeds placed at the base of the pot with water added. Catfish should not be cooked in cold water; instead, it should be cooked in boiling water. Do not cover the pot (this is done to minimise the unfavorable smell. The fish is cooked when it changes colour (4-5 hours).

Fresh catfish: place in saucepan, cook, remove bones, and season with oil and salt.

Remove the bones when cooked, put it back in the pot and season with oil and salt according to taste.

Catfish sandwiches:



In a bowl, slice some apple, lettuce and mushrooms into smaller pieces. In a separate bowl, slice the catfish fillet into smaller pieces and add wheat flour and stir for less than 1 minute. In the bowl with the sliced apple, lettuce and mushrooms, add 1 egg,

some sunflower oil, some milk, a pinch of salt and gently stir. Mix in the catfish pieces and add to a non-stick pan, add tomatoes and gently stir for 8 minutes at less than 50 degrees Celsius. After about 8 minutes the ingredients are crunchy and ready to be placed onto the bread slices.

Breams



Cooking breams:

Place dry reeds and lingagwe at the bottom (this is done in two layers); Lingagwe is a plant found in water with thin thorn-like structure.

Remove the fins, cut the fish open and leave it to air dry for a few minutes; then put the fish in a pot and add warm water (not cold water!), salt, and some

butter (cow lard). Alternatively, add fresh tomato, onions, and oil, then cook slowly. The fish bones can cause choking hence the fish needs to be cooked properly (2-3 hours).

It is best served with mahangu pap.

Fried breams: Fish – put spices for seasoning (any) inside the fish, add tomatoes and onions and fry it in oil.

Smoked fish: The fish is cleaned and cut in half and seasoned with ingredients of any choice. Thereafter, a stick is inserted from the head to the tail and placed afar from the fire (this way the fish is smoked).

Small fish (Mance, vipava): Are best cooked with an addition of Nongongo (*Schinziophyton rautanenii*) and Lingangwe (greens)



VARIATIONS:

Variation 1: Add some spinach when cooking the fish.



Variation 2: Add pounded Manketti (Nongongo, *Schinziophyton rautanenii*) nuts and cook with the fish.



Variation 3: Pour hot water over Rosewood seeds (*Guibourtia coleosperma*), serve on the side with the fish.

Variation 4: Add pumpkin seeds to the fish

Variation 5: Mutete (*Hibiscus sabbdariffa*), to be cooked together with the fish to enhance taste and flavour.

Zambezi Region

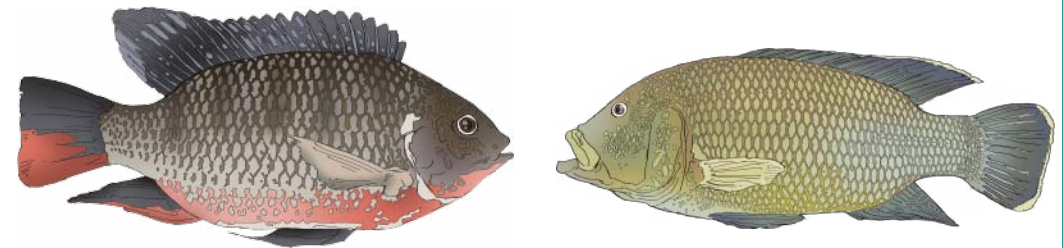


Catfish

Boil water, place the fish into the boiling water. Take the fish out of the boiling water and remove the black skin. Cut the fish into pieces, cut off the head. Place the head at the bottom of the pot, then the rest of the pieces on top, cook for 2-3 hours. Add salt, water, cooking oil, chili, spices, ginger, onion, garlic, fresh tomato. Remove all bones once cooked, add water lilies and cook until the lilies are soft.

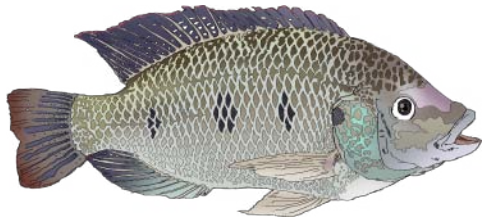
Do not cook catfish together with other fish species. Boil water then use it to wash off the slimy layer of catfish, then cut it to smaller pieces, put it in a pot, boil for at least 2 hours.

Breams



Cooking fresh fish:

- Remove the scales and intestines, then wash the fish.
- Cut reeds & lay them in a pot & put fish fats before putting the fish on top.
- Boil the fish with its fats, one cup of water (but not more), add salt but no cooking oil.
- Boil until its cooked and the water thickens & ready to eat.



Three spot tilapia, Largemouth, Red breast tilapia: place the fish in a pot, add one cup of water only, add salt.

Western bottlenose & Nembele can be cooked together in one pot, remove the scales and intestine, make a hole on its head to remove the brain so that the fish doesn't smell. Cook for at least 4 hours.

Frying fresh fish:

- Remove the scales and intestine then wash the fish.
- Place a lid of a pot on the fire, once the lid is hot, put fish fat on the lid and wait for the fat to melt. Place the fresh fish on the melted fat after it has been salted and begin frying.

Cooking dry fish:

- Boil water in a pot then place the dry fish in the boiling water.
- Add more water when it boils out. Cook the fish for the whole day for it to be really cooked.
- Add salt to the fish and fish fat, no cooking oil should be added. Additionally add ground nuts to the fish.
- Serve once it has been cooked for the whole day.



Braaing fresh fish:

- Wash the fish & remove the scales. Do not remove the intestines, add salt and put it on fire, braai until the fish is ready to eat.

Cooking rotten fish:

- Remove the intestines & scales, wash the fish and put into a pot with no cooking oil, just salt.
- Place the pot on fire, boil the fish in it for a while, remove the bones, add a bit of mealie meal or ground nuts, mix it using a cooking stick. Leave to simmer, remove the bones and serve.

Cooking water plants



Remove outer layer of the water lilies, place reeds at the bottom of your pot, place water lilies on the reeds, place fish on top of the water lilies. You can use any type of fish to cook water lilies, except for Tiger fish and African pike.



Linkuma: Collect them under water, remove the outer layer, then cut them into smaller pieces & wash them. You also place reeds at the bottom of the pot, place them in the pot and boil them for up to ten hours. You can add any fish species except for tiger fish and African pike. After ten hours, remove the bones from the fish, then mix them through, add salt.

African pike was roasted only, because people were cautious of the bones. All fish cooked were cooked together with its fats.



Tigerfish



Tigerfish bones are a bit tricky, on the back they are Y-shaped, so one needs to hold the head and the tail and pull them out sideways before cooking.

Clean the fish before boiling or frying, either by

- Removing the scales, inner part (intestines) and gills, wash it properly.
- Removing the inner part (intestines) and gills only, and leaving the scales. The scales can melt when boiled for a whole day.
- **OR** do not remove the scales or intestines, you cook it as it is.

The black spot on top of the back fin is another part that must be removed, to avoid a bad smell.

If you prefer, you can cut fillets by removing the sides from the inner bones, and removing the small bones with a tweezer; this method works best for big fish with visible bones.

THERE ARE 3 WAYS TO PREPARE A TIGERFISH:

- **Grill on fire (charcoal):** put the prepared fish on the coals unit it is well cooked through.
- **Frying (either on fire or stove):** this is best if you have cut fillets; put salt and pepper with a bit of lemon on the fillets, and fry them on the skin side, until cooked through.
- **Cooking (preferably on fire, not on the stove):** A three-legged pot is best for cooking tigerfish. After cleaning the pot nicely, put the fresh reeds inside to cover the bottom part of the pot. Cut the tigerfish into three pieces, if it's big enough, and put it inside the pot on the reeds. The reason for placing the reeds at the bottom of the pot is to prevent the fish from burning during the process of boiling. Optimal heat is required for it not to burn underneath; It can take 7-8hrs to boil/ cook the tigerfish.

VOTE OF APPRECIATION:

Great thanks to all persons who shared their traditional recipes; special thanks to Mundia Tracey Manga for the tigerfish recipes, Paulina Nghipandulwa & Leo Lucas for the Catfish sandwich recipe and Eunice Silumesi for digging deep into the ancient knowledge of her late grandmother.

