

# Trout Processing

By Rodney Kiser and Ken Semmens

Filleting a trout can be quick and easy with a little practice and the right technique. Learning how to fillet makes it easier to utilize farm raised fish. It also makes it easier to get the freshest fish to your table. Following is a description of the technique for creating a butterfly fillet from a whole trout. Butterfly filleting (head off) should yield approximately 60-65% whole weight.

## Evisceration

Evisceration, or gutting the fish, can be accomplished through a variety of techniques.

### Technique 1

1. Hold the fish vertically, head up.



2. Insert the knife in the anus and cut the length of the belly to the throat.



3. Insert the knife through the soft tissue between the gill and collarbone and cut outward, perpendicular to the belly.



4. Grasp the entrails and pull them out.



5. Cut off the head.



6. Wash the fish in cold water. The kidney (blood line which follows the backbone) may be removed during washing by using the thumb or a spoon. Removal of the kidney is not imperative if fish are to be filleted.

## Technique 2

1. Hold the fish by the head, thumb in gills, belly up.
2. Insert the knife through the soft tissue between the gill and collarbone and cut outward, perpendicular to the belly.



3. Insert the tip of the knife blade under the skin and cut the length of the belly to the anus.



4. Grasp the entrails and pull them out.



5. Cut off the head.



6. Wash the fish in cold water.

The following clips show fish being eviscerated using technique 1 and 2:

([MOV01359.mpg](#) and [MOV01269.mpg](#))

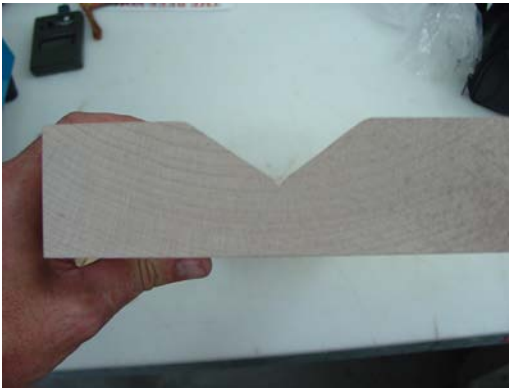
#### Tips and Hints

1. Use a knife that is relative to fish size. A fillet knife with a 4-5 in. blade works well for most trout sizes.
2. Make sure the knife is sharp.
3. Washing fish in a slurry of ice and water with 1% salt will help in removal of blood and fish slime.

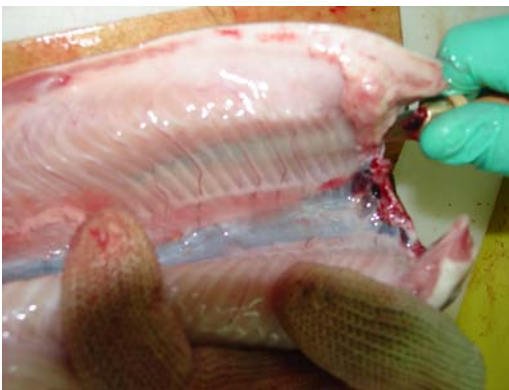
## Butterfly Filleting

The most practical method for filleting trout is the butterfly fillet. Many individuals attempt to fillet trout in the same manner as warm water fish, down the back method.

1. Fillet boards are convenient for butterfly filleting trout, although they are not a necessity. With practice, the technique can be mastered without the aid of a board.



2. Place the fish on the board belly up, tail in.
3. Insert the knife behind the ribs, along the base of the backbone, and work the knife up and out, as close to the ribs as possible.



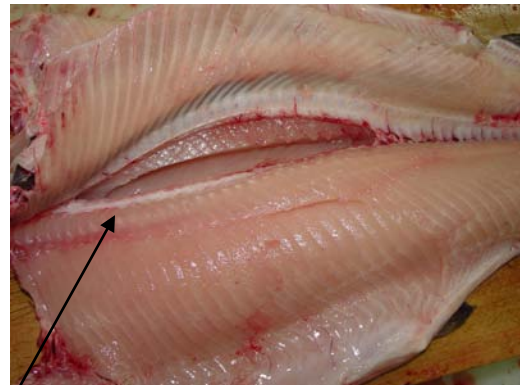
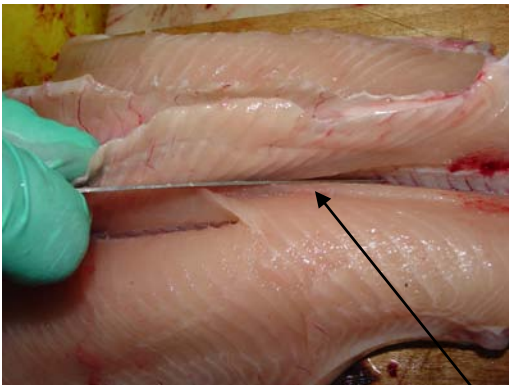
4. Once you reach the anal fin, keep the knife as close to the fin as possible and continue cutting back to the tail.



5. Repeat the process on the other side of the fish.



6. Make a cut, down and in toward the backbone, the length of both sides. You should feel and hear the knife cutting through the small pin-bones.



Pin Bones

7. Cut the frame from the tail using cutters. If cutters are not available, the bone can be broken by hand.



8. Fillet can then be washed under cold water, or washed in ice water, 1% salt slurry, then rinsed.

The following video clips show the process of butterfly filleting:

([MOV01255.mpg](#) and [MOV01284.mpg](#))

### Pin Bones

Filleting does not remove all the bones from fish. The pin bones, which connect the frame to the muscle, are still present. Pin bones are located along the length of the fillet and can be found by gently running the tip of the knife along the muscle. Pin bones can be removed by cutting out the section of muscle where they are located, pulling them out with pliers, or by using a pin bone remover, shown here and in the clip. Pin bone removers are too expensive to be an option for most people. Removal of pin bones is not a must for a satisfactory eating experience. Most fish are cooked, and pin bones removed during consumption. When consuming smaller fish, pin bones can be eaten. An example is the small bones eaten in sardines.



[\(MOV01312.mpg\)](#)

Trout are a good source of protein, contain less saturated fat, and possess Omega 3 – fatty acids. Many recipes exist to enhance your trout dining experience ([www.ustfa.org](http://www.ustfa.org)). Those interested in purchasing trout or visiting one of West Virginia's fee-fishing locations should go to [http://aquaculture.ext.wvu.edu/farm\\_ponds/fee\\_fishing](http://aquaculture.ext.wvu.edu/farm_ponds/fee_fishing) to see what is available in your area.