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Fish-cleaning safety tips given

LYONS—There is concern recently over the safety of eating freshwater fish caught in Lake Ontario. Lake Ontario salmon and trout do contain PCB's or polychlorinated biphenyls.

Some fish contain levels up to five times higher than the regulations set by the Food and Drug Administration for the commercial sale of fish. However, the FDA has not set a definite ruling on the safety of eating PCB-contaminated fish, as it is not sure how much humans can tolerate, according to Doris S. Castor, Wayne County Home Economics agent.

Until a ruling is made, Mrs. Castor has suggested some simple steps in fish preparation that can lessen consumption of PCB's. She said correct preparation and cooking can eliminate

much PCB.

Members of the salmon family, including trout, store up fat in certain parts of their body. PCB's are stored in the greatest concentration in the fat deposits. Locating and removing these areas is a way to eliminate a large portion of contaminants.

In salmon, one fat area runs along the top (dorsal) fin line from head to tail. Roughly, it is V shaped in form and measures up to one-half inch in depth on mature salmon. Studies have shown that it contains 20 per cent fat, Mrs. Castor pointed out. If the fish is to be filleted, she suggested cutting off a strip up to one-half inch wide on either side of the back fin. If the fish is to be cooked whole, make a V-shaped cut from head to tail while removing the top fin. Dispose of the fat strip.

A second fat region is an area called the belly-flap. This is found in all fish. After the fish has been slit and gutted, remove one-half to three-fourths of an inch of flesh on each belly-flap from gills to anal opening before cooking.

A third layer of fat deposits in most fish is found in a thin layer just under the skin and over the entire body. Most of this fat will melt out if fish is skinned or the skin is pricked with a sharp fork.

said Mrs. Castor.

The last easily removable fat deposit is the darker flesh along the sides of the fish visible after skin has been removed. A shallow cut will remove most of the darker flesh without ruining steaks or fillets.

Mrs. Castor said steamed, baked or broiled fish can drain during cooking. As the fats melt out, PCB are carried away. Dishes should be avoided in which the fish cooks in its own juices, bottled or in chowders, and she said home economics is not recommending that freshwater fish from the lake be canned.

The New York State Dept. of Health is recommending that consumers limit their intake of PCB-contaminated fish to one meal a week. Michigan and Wisconsin have also made this recommendation.

The Sea Grant Advisory Service has explained polychlorinated biphenyls as a complex mixture of chemicals found in the environment. They are totally man-made since the 1930's and found in water and air. High concentrations of PCB's accumulate in human fatty tissues and is not eliminated. Large doses affect liver, skin, growth, reproduction and general health, but no one knows how much PCB can be tolerated.

Freshwater fish are the only concern at the present time. Tests show that United States and Canada have widespread PCB accumulations in fish, animals and persons. Fat persons store more than thin persons.

Species having large amounts of PCBs are alewives, northern pike, smelt, eels, salmon, trout and striped bass.