

The Fisheries of the Antilles*

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FISHERIES are not organized in the Antilles but are carried on by the inhabitants of the region with small boats and primitive gear which the fishermen construct themselves.

The type of boat most often encountered is the "gommier." It is hollowed out of the trunk of a tree, ordinarily a gumtree, from which the name is given to the boat. The gommier is cheap and has good qualities: lightness, strength, speed, insubmersibility, but also grave faults. The gommiers used for fishing are very narrow, and rarely exceed a ton in capacity. They have great instability and overturn very easily. The gommiers are used at Martinique, at Dominique and Guadeloupe by the negro fishermen.

At St. Martin, St. Barthelemy and at the Saintes, the boats are less primitive: they are canoes, but not as pointed as those seen in the French fishing ports. These are also used on the east coast of Guadeloupe. These boats, more costly than the canoes, are very light and fast and hold the sea well; they sometimes leave the coast and face the quite strong seas of the channels of Dominique and Guadeloupe.

The gear is made by the fishermen. Some of it recalls that of the natives of the east coast of Africa and is very primitive. The following gear is used: trolling lines, set lines, traps, and nets of various kinds.

The natives of Martinique and Guadeloupe are excellent swimmers and divers, and commonly practice this type of fishing. By this means they capture spiny lobsters, conchs (*Strombe*), helmet shells and sometimes turtles.

Fishing by traps is most prevalent in the Antilles. This type of fishing is best adapted to the majority of depths actually exploited and also to the temperament of the inhabitants. Traps of many different forms and sizes are constructed by the fishermen. They are of wood or of metallic screen, which has the advantage of being lighter and more solid. They have one or two entrances. The trap, weighted at its lower part by big stones, is anchored in shallow water, most often not baited. When baited, it is ordinarily with lobster, with sea urchins, with fish or fruit (oranges or mangoes) or fragments of white dishes.

In shallow depths, about 6 to 8 metres, traps are anchored without buoys, in order to remain unseen, since little confidence exists between fishermen. The traps are recovered by aid of a gaff or a grapple.

The most important and the most productive fishing method is seining, which is done on certain parts of the shore where the working of this gear is possible without too much damage. Next in importance is the fishery with the straight net of which the dimensions vary according to the region. The mesh size depends on the size of the fish caught.

The Antillian fishermen also use explosives and poisonous plants. They make their own explosives which they place in bottles or tin cans. They use these in the isolated creeks and cause a heavy mortality of immature fish without making large catches of salable fish. The fishermen are very familiar with the poisonous plants which abound in their forests and on their coasts, and which they utilize to intoxicate the fish. They employ this mode of fishing on the coast and more particularly in the rivers. These customs are disastrous because of the general destruction of young fish which they cause.

* Extract of a translation of the report. Read by M. Taillart, l'Administrateur Principal de l'Inscription Maritime de la Martinique.

On board boats the fisherman sometimes puts a palm leaf over the fish which he has captured to protect them from the heat of the sun. But most often he is content to sprinkle a little sea water over them. This water is 28°-29°C in May to July. The fish are never cleaned on board, so that they become soft very easily if the fisherman's return is delayed or if they are not sold the same day. The nearness of the fishery areas permits them to arrive usually in a good state of preservation. Much of the fish is captured by seine or very close to the coast in the traps; the big fish, tunas, dorados, tazor, are taken by line in the morning a short distance from the coast, and are sold a little later in the first hours of the afternoon.

Consumption of fresh fish is limited to the coastal cities and the villages of the fishermen. Despite the short distances which separate the coastal villages from the interior, and the great number of trucks which circulate in the islands, fresh fish does not reach them. Even villages situated on the coasts of the islands are often deprived of it. They are supplied, when time permits, by fishermen of neighboring villages, the small number of these crafts not being able to satisfy the demand of local consumption.

Because of the fault of the organization of the fishery and of transportation, and the employment of gear and procedures badly adapted to the richness of the surrounding waters, a great part of the population lacks fresh fish, and is obliged to import salted and canned fish.

In the little islands, like Saint Barthelemy, Saint Martin, the Saintes, and Marie-Galante, where the boats are more modern and of greater capacity, and the fishermen more active than at Martinique and Guadeloupe, production often surpasses the local ability to absorb it.

In the Antilles, the fish is sold on the beach, at the market, or in exceptional cases in a local specialty shop.

The principal edible marine animals of the Antilles are listed at the end of this paper.

It is not possible to give even an approximation of the quantity of fish landed in the Antilles. There exist no statistics on the subject.

Antillian fishermen have very few needs and only exercise their energy to satisfy them. They habitually work only enough to assure their food for the day, and to replace some of their gear from time to time. If fish are scarce they go out regularly. If fish are abundant, they rest for a number of days proportionate to the catch which they have made. Sometimes they will visit near-by traps, but they will not continue their fishing, no matter how good fishing has been. To increase the fishermen's production it would be necessary to change their mentality and to strive against their natural laziness by the creation of new needs. It would also be necessary to develop their tendency to act in groups, which is manifested on certain occasions.

Sometimes a whole village will assist in hauling a beach seine and share in the catch as payment for their efforts. Similar cooperative effort is put forward when the turtles appear on the beach to spawn, the men taking turns in watching for the appearance of these animals. One can develop the need for unity and for group efforts on the part of the fishermen by showing them all the advantages that they would receive from it.

The fishermen are unanimous in declaring that the materials which they use cost too much. A cooperative would have a double advantage, in suppressing certain abuses and in safeguarding the maritime rights of fishermen. It would also be able to function in the sale of sea products. The fishermen who are used

to this group activity will accept more easily the necessary reforms for the increase of production.

An increase in size of boats will permit the capture of larger and more fish, and the use of new gear. This will enlarge the range of action, will extend the fishery to species not used until it will give a greater security to the fishermen. The installation of auxiliary motors will be realizable and will follow sooner or later, and will permit greater regularity of supply at the markets.

EDIBLE FISH OF MARTINIQUE

FRENCH COMMON NAME	*ENGLISH COMMON NAME	*SCIENTIFIC NAME
Anguille	Eel	<i>Anguilla bostoniensis</i>
Balaou	Ballyhoo	<i>Hemiramphus brasiliensis</i>
Banane	Tenpounder	<i>Elops saurus</i>
Barbarin	Yellow goatfish	<i>Upeneus martinicus</i>
Bayole	Tang	<i>Acanthurus hepatus</i>
Becune	Barracuda	<i>Sphyrna barracuda</i>
Blanche	Mojarra	<i>Gerres rhombeus</i>
Blanche forme allongée	Mojarra	<i>Gerres cironeus</i>
Bonite dorsales écartées	Frigate mackerel	<i>Auxis thazard</i>
Bonite ventre rayé (Thon bariolé)	Artic bonito	<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>
Bracou	Snapper	<i>Lutjanus sp.</i>
Brochet	Snook	<i>Centropomus undecimalis</i>
Brochet petite taille	Snook	<i>Centropomus ensiferus</i>
Capitaine	Hogfish	<i>Bodianus rufus</i>
Carangue	Blue runner	<i>Caranx ruber</i>
Carangue grasse	Pompano	<i>Trachinostus glaucus</i>
	Jack crevalle	<i>Caranx hippos</i>
Carangue plate (Sapatere)	Leather jacket	<i>Oligoplites saurus</i>
Carangue-Lune	Lookdown	<i>Vomer setapinnis</i>
Carneau	Mullet	<i>Mugil brasiliensis</i>
Carpe bleue	Parrotfish	<i>Sparisoma aurofrenatum</i>
Chirurgien	Tang	<i>Acanthurus bahianus</i>
Coco	Whitemouth drummer	<i>Micropogon furnieri</i>
Codinde		<i>Exocoostus bahiensis</i>
Coffre a cornes	Trunk fish	<i>Lactophrys tricornis</i>
Congre bariolé	Conger eel	<i>Lycodontis millaris</i>
Congre verte	Conger eel	<i>Lycodontis virescens</i>
Crapaud	Scorpion fish	<i>Scorpaena plumieri</i>
Creole or Tijo		<i>Paranthias furcifer</i>
		<i>Serranus creolus</i>
Coulirou	Bigeye scad	<i>Trachurophus crumenophthalmus</i>
Couronné	Grouper	<i>Petrometropon cruetentus</i>
Couronné rouge	Grouper	<i>Epinephelus adsenstonis</i>
Dorado	Dorado	<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>
Germon	Albacore	<i>Germo alalunga</i>
Goréte	Caesar grunt	<i>Haemulon carbonarium</i>
Grand écaille	Tarpon	<i>Megalops atlanticus</i>
Grands-Yeux	Lane snapper	<i>Lutjanus synagris</i>
Gueule-rouge	Grunt	<i>Haemulon plumieri</i>
Hareng	Thread herring	<i>Opisthonema oglinum</i>
Juif	Catalufa	<i>Priacanthus arenatus</i>
Kiakia or Quiaquia	Scad	<i>Decapterus sanctae-helenae</i>
Languiale		<i>Athlennes hians</i>
Maquereau	Mackerel scad	<i>Decapterus macarellus</i>
Marignan	Squirrelfish	<i>Holocentrus adscencionis</i>
Mè-Balaou	Sailfish	<i>Istisphorus americanus</i>
Monbin	Squirrelfish	<i>Myripristis jacobus</i>
Moringue	Moray	<i>Gymnothorax moringa</i>
Mulet	Silver mullet	<i>Mugil curema</i>
Orphie	Needlefish	<i>Strongylura acus</i>
Orphie	Needlefish	<i>Tylosurus ardeola</i>
Orphie-Terre	Needlefish	<i>Tylosurus raphidoma</i>
Ouachalou or Tachalou	Parrot fish	<i>Pseudoscarus guacamaica</i>
Pagre	Hamlet	<i>Hypoplectrus camprurus</i>
Pantouffier	Shovelnose shark	<i>Sphyrna tudes</i>

*English common names and revision of scientific names by Luis Rene Rivas, Marine Laboratory, University of Miami.

Pisciette or Pisquette	Anchovy	<i>Stolephorus per fasciatus</i>
Poisson armé	Porcupine-fish	<i>Diodon hystrix</i>
Portugais	Queen angelfish	<i>Angelichthys ciliaris</i>
Portugais noir, croissants blancs	Black angelfish	<i>Pomachantus arcuatus</i>
Raie	Ray	<i>Dasyatis sabina</i>
Rele	Wahoo	<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>
Requin bleu	Blue shark	<i>Prionace glauca</i>
Requin blanc	Lemon shark	<i>Hypoprien brevirostris</i>
Requin piche	Mako shark	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>
Requin gris clair	Shark	<i>Carcharhinus lamiella</i>
Requin noiratre	Shark	<i>Carcharhinus limbatus</i>
Rondeau or Haut-dos		<i>Archosargus unimaculatus</i>
Sade ordinaire	Yellowtail	<i>Ocyurus chrysurus</i>
Sarde dent chion	Schoolmaster	<i>Lutjanus apodus</i>
Sarde grise	Bermuda chub	<i>Kyphosus sp.</i>
Sarde a plume	Porgy	<i>Calamus proridens</i>
Sardine	Sardine	<i>Harengula clupeiola</i>
Sardine	Loose scaled sardine	<i>Harengula humeralis</i>
Sole	Hogchocker	<i>Achirus lineatus</i>
Sole bouclée	Flounder	<i>Bothus luhatius</i>
Sole grandes pectorales		<i>Bothus maculifer</i>
Sorbe	Mahogany snapper	<i>Lutjanus mahogani</i>
Souris	Red goatfish	<i>Upeneus maculatus</i>
Tazar	Kingfish	<i>Scomberomorus cavalla</i>
Thon (gros)	Bluefin tuna	<i>Thunnus thynnus</i>
Titiri: Larve d'un goblide		<i>Sycidium sp.</i>
Ti-zieu	Broadbill swordfish	<i>Rhomboplites aurorubens</i>
Vareux or Varé	Silk snapper	<i>Xiphias gladius</i>
Vermeille	Grouper	<i>Lutjanus vivanus</i>
Vieille	Catalufa	<i>Epinephelus mystacinus</i>
Vieille	Grouper	<i>Priacanthus cruentatus</i>
Vieille marbree	Scamp	<i>Mycteroperca bonaci</i>
Vieille noiratre marbree	Sand eel	<i>Mycteroperca falcata</i>
Vive	Flying fish	<i>Malacanthus plumieri</i>
Volant		<i>Excoetus rufipinnis</i>