



[class Chondrichthyes subclass Elasmobranchii superorder Selachimorpha]

**Sharks** are very different from other fish. When the modern fish (teleosts - bony fish) came on the scene they rapidly pushed their predecessors toward extinction. Under severe stress these older fish back evolved some features of their own primitive ancestors while adding some very advanced features as well. So successful were these adaptations the following era is called "The Age of Sharks" and modern fish had to struggle to survive.



The skin is removed and meat is cut for cooking.

Sharks have much larger brains than modern fish and a more complex social structure. They generally give live birth instead of laying eggs. They have no bones but a skeleton of cartilage, the light weight of which allows them to grow very large and still float. Their scales are formed like teeth rather than the removable flakes on modern fish (thus shark is not kosher). In the U.S. shark is generally marketed as steaks about 1-1/2 inch thick.

Some sharks are now on the conservation lists. Do not buy shark fin or order sharkfin soup - harvesting methods are inhumane, very wasteful, and some of the sharks used are rated "vulnerable" or "threatened".

Shark Steaks Shark does not cook at all like other fish. Modern fish cook so quickly and flake apart because they have none of the connective tissue land animals have. Shark has connective tissue, distributed differently from land animals, but connective tissue it is. Shark stays firm when cooked, so firm you may need a knife to slice it. The texture is more like pork than like fish, and the flavor somewhere between pork and fish.

Shark must be bled as soon as caught. Commercially caught shark is generally handled correctly but if you catch one yourself keep this in mind. Shark spoils rapidly so use it right away or freeze immediately. As with the related skates and rays you can tell freshness by smell. If there's a distinct smell of ammonia it's not fresh. If there's just a faint trace of ammonia a soak in milk or water acidulated with citric acid will clear it up, but really fresh is better.

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