

Lake Fish Forecast August 2015

I would have bet against what is currently happening with our lake fish market. Typically, there are good catches in the spring to carry the supply through the summer. Unfortunately, that is not the case this year. I have never experienced a similar season in my 28 years in the fish business. Prime Walleye, sizes such as 6/8, 8/10, 10/12, and 12/14, are non-existent. Currently, 2/4 and 4/6 Walleye is available. However, with added pressure, due to the lack of the other sizes, their supply may possibly diminish next. Freshwater Fish has suspended Walleye fishing until September 1st due to extreme efforts with very little catches. Unfortunately, our next hope for Walleye would be mid-September. Let your end users know that this lack of prime sized Walleye will more than likely continue through winter and even Lent 2016.

Sadly, Yellow Lake Perch is experiencing the same tragedy. Effort is high with the exchange rate favoring the US and fuel being 27% of what it was last year. With all of this there is less being produced this year than last and the freezers are empty from our last Lenten season.

What does this mean for the lake fish market?

- If you are looking for Native North American product expect to pay a lot. Even if you are willing to pay a lot, it's not going to be readily available unless the market drastically changes in the fall.
- The European cousins will be the closest equivalent to keeping fish on the menu with a comparable (or even less) price. Euro perch and zander (pike perch) are great eating, readily available, and have equal "sizes to match" to what most end users are currently using regarding portion size. If there was ever a time to make a menu change... this is it.

Sauger in the 1.5-2.5 size, along with the 2.5-4.5 size, is still readily available. It may be labeled as "Canadian Pike" on menus and be cheaper in price than its close cousin Walleye.

Bluegill from Canada and China are still in good supplies.

Riverside has access to a stable market of 4-5oz boneless skinless Northern Pike portions. Northern Pike is a great lake fish for less capital than other lake fish items.

Last but not least, Lake Smelt. This is another species that could disappear so enjoy it while you can get it. Fall will determine if this will be available for the spring season.

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