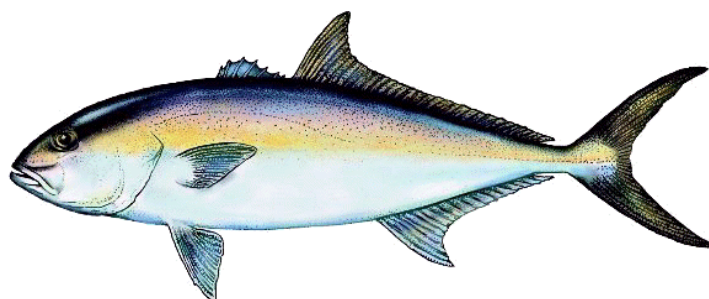


# ***Florida Food Fare***

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### ***Amberjack***

**Description:** Amberjacks are a species of fish found in the Florida Gulf waters during various times of the year. Amberjacks are members of the jack family, *Carangidae*, and are found throughout Florida around natural or man made reefs, rock outcrops and wrecks. A close cousin to the Jack and Pompano, the Amberjack (*Hardious Pullious*) is slender and more streamline. An astute fisherman might not be surprised to learn that there is more than one variety of amberjack in the Gulf – in fact, there are really four. The recognized common names of these are: greater amberjack, lesser amberjack, Almaco jack, and banded rudderfish.

The greater amberjack is the most abundant, but the others certainly cannot be considered rare. It is a colorful fish with lavender and golden tints and an amber band from the eye along the middle of their body to the tail. The back is blue or olive green and the side and belly are silvery-white. Occasionally amberjacks have an amber, even pinkish, cast to the body. Amberjacks get their name from the amber colored stripe usually present from the eye along the middle of their body. But they also often have a very distinctive dark bar from the snout, through the eye, to the beginning of the dorsal fin. All of the amberjacks have a distinct notch or groove, on both the top and bottom of the caudal peduncle, just in front of the tail-fin; they also lack the ridge of scutes along the real flank that is present in so many jacks.

**Availability:** Amberjacks are voracious predators that forage over reefs and wrecks in small groups and can weigh more than 150 pounds, but the smaller amberjacks, weighing 15 pounds or less, are considered the best to eat. They are caught by commercial fishermen using long lines. A migratory species, the best time to hook up with an Amberjack in Gulf waters is during the warmer months. Prime time is May through September. Bottom feeders by nature they co-inhabit oil rigs and shell banks with snapper's. They are most commonly encountered by anglers fishing for grouper and snapper. So when snapper anglers are busy hauling in a ice chest full of snapper, a few of these are bound to get hauled across the deck of the boat for good measure. They are not usually sold in abundance in fish markets but occasionally will be available.

**Nutritional Value:** Approximate nutritional values for 4 ounces (114 grams) of raw, edible portion: 120 calories; 20 calories from fat; 2g total fat; 0g saturated fat; 50mg cholesterol; 40mg sodium; 0g total carbohydrates; 24g protein; 4% DV\* calcium; 4% DV iron. \*DV means Daily Value.

**Selection and Care:** Amberjacks are edible, but with the choice between them and a nice Snapper most anglers enjoy the fight and send them back to the bottom to fight another day. As to the taste test, amberjacks probably rate in the middle of the fish family, better than these jacks species with the scute ridge on the rear flank, but not nearly as fine as the pompano. However, because of their firm flesh, recently amberjacks have become a really popular fish for grilling.

Amberjacks should be filleted, skinned and carefully trimmed. To ensure good taste, the red muscle should be removed and discarded. Keep iced until ready to cook or freeze as quickly as possible. Keep refrigerated at 32-38 degrees F and use within one to two days or store in freezer at 0 degrees F up to four months. Thaw frozen amberjack in the refrigerator or under cold running water. Amberjacks can be pan fried, broiled, smoked, baked, deep fried, charcoal broiled or cooked in chowder. Smoked amberjacks are used to make smoked fish spreads.

## **Recipes:**

### **Ginger-Honey Amberjack**

1 1/2 pound amberjack fillets	1 red bell pepper, seeded, and cut in 2-inch strips
1/2 cup honey	
1 teaspoons ground ginger	1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and cut in 2-inch strips

Cut fillets into serving size pieces; set aside. Combine honey and ginger; use half of honey to coat fish evenly. Place on oiled grill over medium-hot coals basting frequently with honey mixture; and turn once. Coat bell peppers with remaining

honey mixture and grill with fish until tender, turn peppers often to avoid burning. Fish is done when it flakes easily when tested with a fork. Yield: 4 servings

### **Spicy Seafood Salsa**

1/2 cup diced red bell pepper	1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/2 cup diced yellow bell pepper	1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
3 tablespoons chopped mild green chilies	1 cup seeded, diced tomatoes
2 tablespoons chopped green onions	1 pound amberjack fillets, cut in bite sized pieces
1 teaspoon ground coriander	1/2 pound calico scallops
1 teaspoon chopped fresh datil, or other hot pepper	2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro
	2 tablespoons chopped green olives

Combine first 6 ingredients in a microwave safe 10-inch diameter glass pie plate. Cover with waxed paper and microwave on high for 1-2 minutes. Combine cornstarch and vinegar; mix well and add to vegetable mixture. Cover and microwave on high for 2-3 minutes; stir. Mix in tomatoes, fish and scallops; cover and microwave on high for 2-3 minutes. Stir and cook for 2 additional minutes or until the fish flakes. Remove from microwave and top with cilantro and olives. Serve immediately. Yield: 6 servings

### **The Squeeze**

1 pound fish fillets	1/4 cup lite soy sauce
1/4 cup lime juice	1 teaspoon grated ginger
1/3 cup pink grapefruit juice	2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
1/2 C orange juice	1 shallot, peeled and quartered
1/2 tablespoon olive oil	1/8 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Whisk together all ingredients except fish and let rest for at least one hour. Place fish in marinade and refrigerate for at least one hour, turning occasionally. Preheat broiler. Place fish in a greased ovenproof dish. Pour in marinade until it is about 1/4 inch deep. Place fish under broiler until it flakes easily.

**Note:** This marinade is also a good one to use before grilling amberjack.