



Number: 02

Date Published: 2019/12/01

Issue	FORMALIN-TAINTED GALUNGGONG
Background	<p>In August 2018, a fisher folk group claimed that one of the sources of imported galunggong imports uses formalin to preserve fish harvests. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) assured the public that all fish commodities available in the markets are safe and free from any harmful substances.</p> <p>Fish is part of the typical diet of every Filipino as it is a source of high quality protein and it is low in saturated fat. Fish is also loaded with important nutrients and the best source of omega-3 fatty acids.</p>
Formaldehyde in Food	<p>Formaldehyde is a natural component of various food in which the highest concentrations (i.e. up to 60 mg/kg) occur in some fruits and marine fish. While formaldehyde forms postmortem in fish, high levels do not accumulate in fish tissues.</p>
Adverse Health Effect	<p>In over a decade, many research reported that formaldehyde has a potential to cause cancer. Ingestion of a small amount (30 mL or 1 oz) of a solution containing 37% of formaldehyde can cause acute toxicity exemplified by severe abdominal pain, vomiting, bleeding and possible death.</p>
Risk Mitigation	<p>Fresh fish has firm flesh, a stiff body, intact scales, red gills and bright eyes. Consumers are encouraged to select fresh fish stored on ice or refrigerated and are not slippery or slimy to touch.</p> <p>To ensure food safety, wash the fish thoroughly with running tap water, as formaldehyde is soluble in water and washing can aid its reduction. The heat during cooking can also aid in the removal of formaldehyde.</p>
Reference/s	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI). Undated. Fish in the Filipino Diet. Available at: http://www.nast.ph/index.php/downloads/category/113-luzonregional-scientificmeeting?download=382:plenary-session-4-fish-in-the-filipino-diet2. Government of Hongkong Centre for Food Safety. 20017. Food Safety Focus – Formaldehyde in Food. Available at: https://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/multimedia/multimedia_pub/multimedia_pub_fsf_06_01.html3. Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). 2018. Agricultural Indicator System – Food Consumption and Nutrition.4. World Health Organization (WHO). 2015. Food Safety: What you should know. Available at: http://www.searo.who.int/entity/world_health_day/2015/whd-what-you-should-know/en/5. World Health Organization (WHO). 2001. Chapter on formaldehyde. Available at: http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/123062/AQG2ndEd_5_8Formaldehyde.pdf