



# *The Fresh Fish Forecast*

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February 2012

Well folks, we made it to February and I can say with some assurance that we only have six weeks of winter left. While many people rely on Punxsutaney Phil to make the prognostication, I have a more reliable source. One of our best and oldest customers waits to see if his wife sees her shadow on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and reports his finding to me. She has not been wrong in thirty years and I will put that record up against any groundhog! Now on a slightly more serious note, here is how I see the month shaping up for the fisheries: Here in Virginia fishermen licensed to fish for Rockfish (Striped Bass) have been issued their tags for the 2012 season. Although the numbers of fish found in our waters can vary year to year, my expectation would be to see fair to good numbers of large and jumbo rock to make it into the market. Additionally, the state of Maryland reopens to fishing this month and we expect to see at least fair numbers of 2-4# fish from that end of the bay. Next month, if all goes to pattern, we should see some of the best quality and pricing of the year for Rock as the ocean run northern migration peaks off of our shores. For the connoisseurs of Shad roe, February is the month when this delicacy becomes available. Although Virginia has had a Shad fishing moratorium in place since 1994, we will be bringing up fish from Georgia and the Carolinas to satisfy the demand for this traditional favorite. We can also expect good flounder (fluke) availability as North Carolina is open for trawling this month. Virginia's flounder trawl fishery opens March 1. Tuna and Swordfish have been at near all time highs since the beginning of the year and it will be difficult to predict what the availability and pricing will be this month. There are some encouraging signs coming from the US gulf longliners and the Trinidad and Venezuelan fleets are fishing yellowfins right now. Hopefully we will see improved landings to help push prices back to more affordable levels. We have had and will continue to have similar issues with grouper this month. Fishing has been slow and prices have been high due to lack of production. The South Atlantic is closed for the next few months and Mexico will close February 15 and remain closed through March 15. There will be some domestic production out of Florida but expect prices to remain high. Mahi (dolphin) production should remain steady and improve coming off of the full moon on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Panama are all expected to produce good amounts of fish. We should also see a variety of both imported and domestic snappers this month but expect prices to remain on the high side. On the farm raised side of the fish equation we have mostly positive news going forward this month and beyond. Chilean salmon production has improved dramatically since the second half of 2011 and I expect a continuation of that trend in 2012. We expect reasonable pricing and good availability on PBO fillets throughout this month and into the spring. Our premium quality Faroe Island and Scottish salmon will also be readily available and with attractive pricing. Tilapia supply and pricing remains stable with improved availability and pricing on catfish. That's all I have for this month folks except to thank all of our customers for their continued support of Sam Rust Seafood, see you next month.