CATANESE CLASSICS

Sea urchin

ABOUT

There are about 500 species of sea urchins worldwide, but the major commercially valuable species in the United States are the red, green and purple sea urchins. The spherical echinoderms have a hard, spiny shell called a "test," which contains a star-shaped mass comprising five skeins of gonads (in males) or roe (females); both are marketed as roe. The sushi designation uni is also widely used, because the Japanese are major urchin consumers. All three urchin species are harvested on the U.S. Pacific Coast; red and purple are found from Baja, California to Alaska, and greens are taken from Washington to Alaska. Only green urchins are commercially harvested on the Atlantic Coast, from eastern Canada to Cape Cod. The largest U.S. producers are California (red urchins) and Maine (green urchins). Most product winds up in Japan. West Cost urchins are harvested by divers. East Coast urchins are taken by diving and trawling.

PRODUCT PROFILE

The largest of the three urchins is the red, with a shell diameter of around 7 inches; greens are the smallest at around 1 1/2 inches. Urchin roe ranges in color from canary yellow to orange. The membrane holding the roe should be intact. Cleaned uni is soaked in an alum-salt solution that firms the membrane.High-quality uni has a sweet taste and a smooth, buttery texture. Male roe is silkier; female roe is textured more like fine cream of wheat.

COOKING TIPS

Uni can be eaten from the shell as is, or spread on crackers with a dash of lemon juice. Use it as sushi, in omelets, in rich seafood sauces or as a filling in crepes. Fresh urchin roe is best, since frozen roe loses some texture and the membrane sacs can break, but it's still fine for sauces and such.



NUTRITION FACTS

Calories	150
Fat Calories	50 g.
Total Fat	10 g.
Saturated Fat	0 g.
Cholesterol	200 mg.
Sodium	200 mg.
Protein	10 g.
Omega 3	0.5 g.

PRIMARY PRODUCT FORMS

Fresh: Roe
Frozen: Roe
Value-added: Salted roe, Canned roe, Fermented paste

GLOBAL SUPPLY

Canada, United States

COOKING METHODS

- [x] Bake
- [ ] Boil
- [ ] Broil
- [ ] Fry
- [ ] Grill
- [ ] Pate
- [ ] Poach
- [x] Saute
- [ ] Smoke
- [x] Steam