



VANCOUVER · SINCE 1966

BRING THIS WITH YOU

The Fish Counter Script

Five questions that get you the best fish in the case —
and what each answer actually tells you.

The family eats first.

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HOW TO USE THIS

The counter was never intimidating. You just didn't know **what to ask**.

Every fish counter has fish worth buying today and fish that can wait. The person standing behind it knows exactly which is which. These five questions get them to tell you.

None of them are rude. A good fishmonger **likes** these questions — they're the ones another fishmonger would ask. That's the whole trick: ask like an insider, get treated like one.

And half of what you learn here isn't about the fish at all. It's about whether this counter has earned your money. Pay as much attention to **how** they answer as to what they say.

Screenshot it. Bring it Saturday.

QUESTION 01

“When did it come in?”

You're asking how long this fish has been in the building. Inside the last couple of days and you're fine.

GOOD ANSWER

A day. “Tuesday.” Specific, immediate, no hesitation.

RED FLAG

“It's all fresh.” That's a reflex, not an answer. Fresh isn't a date.

QUESTION 02

“And when was it cut?”

This is the one almost nobody asks, and it's the one that marks you as someone who knows.

The arrival date tells you how long it's been in the building. The cut date tells you how long that surface has been open to the air. They are not the same question, and they don't always have the same answer.

GOOD ANSWER

Also inside the last couple of days — ideally that morning.

RED FLAG

They don't know. Or the fish came in days before it was cut.

QUESTION 03

“Can I smell it?”

It shouldn't smell. Some species — cod especially — carry a genuine oceanic smell, and that's the fish, not decay. What you're ruling out is *off*. If something's wrong, you'll know immediately.

GOOD ANSWER

“Of course.” A counter happy to hand it over is telling you something before you even lean in.

RED FLAG

Reluctance. And anything sour, sharp, or ammonia — that's not the ocean.

QUESTION 04 — THE TELL

“Where's it from?”

This one isn't really about the fish. It's about them.

If they know where it came from, **they have a connection to it**. Somebody in that chain cared enough to pass the information along — and people who pass along the story usually handled the fish the same way.

GOOD ANSWER

Somewhere specific, said without looking it up.

RED FLAG

A shrug. The fish may still be fine — but nobody there is paying attention, so you're on your own.

QUESTION 05

“What do you recommend?”

The question people are embarrassed to ask and shouldn't be. Ask it on your first visit and on your thousandth. The best fish in that case changes daily, and they're the only ones who know what it is today.

Take the recommendation, especially while you're still learning. That's not a shortcut — it's the fastest way to learn what good tastes like.

GOOD ANSWER

A real, specific pick — and a reason behind it.

RED FLAG

“It's all good.” Nobody who handles fish every day believes that.

Then bank the answer.

Here's the part that pays off for years. Cook what they recommended, and pay attention.

If it's good, **you've found your counter** — and your guy. Keep going back and ask for them by name.

If it isn't, that's the most useful thing you learned all day. A bad recommendation is permanent information. Bank it, and don't take their word again.

AFTER YOU BUY

Don't wreck it on the way **home.**

You just did the hard part. This is how you protect it.

Eat it the same day, if you can.

That's the whole game. Everything below is what to do when life doesn't allow it.

Rinse it under cold water and pat it dry.

Ten seconds, and worth it every time.

A day or two out? Sandwich it between two ice packs.

Low in the fridge — the bottom is the coldest part of it. The ice packs do the rest.

Or marinate it in olive oil and salt.

Both are natural preservatives, so it buys you time while it's already doing flavour work. Do both if you like — ice packs and a marinade. That's what I do.



That's the script.

Use it once and you'll never walk up to a fish counter the same way again.

Use it every week and they'll start recognising you — and that's when you really start eating well.

Want to learn the knife work too?

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