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## **NNB News : 2013 : 06 : 16 : Local Seafood Markets Offer Different Atmosphere, Lower Prices**

Tyler Killete

Chelsea Tatham

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June 16, 2013 Midtown No comments

## LOCAL SEAFOOD MARKETS OFFER DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERE, LOWER PRICES

By Tyler Killelte and Chelsea Tatham

Family owned and operated since 1975, Mastry's Tackle offers an unconventional shopping experience for St. Petersburg seafood connoisseurs. Instead of glass freezers of neatly arranged fish filets, Mastry's displays its grouper, tilapia, snapper, catfish, mackerel, perch and jumbo shrimp in large plastic white coolers — bones, scales and eyes still intact.

Owner Larry Mastry said the store has always been set up this way.

"You don't find many markets where you buy fish out of a cooler," he said.

But the set up seems to work well for the self-dubbed "down home country store." On a Tuesday afternoon, a steady stream of customers flow in from Fourth Street S.

St. Petersburg offers a wealth of family owned and operated seafood markets but none are quite like Mastry's, with its full tackle shop and freezer full of cold beer. Prices average somewhere between \$4 and \$8 per pound for fish.

Much of the seafood at Mastry's comes from the Tampa Bay and Gulf of Mexico. Inshore fish like sheepshead and mullet are their best sellers, along with freshwater catfish, which Mastry said are "conducive to the neighborhood."

The store buys inshore fish from local fisherman and heads to the beaches for gulf fish, which are sold from fish houses.

Inventory and business vary according to the weather and seasons. Mid-spring to late summer is generally the store's most profitable time.

After the Deep Horizon oil spill in 2010, Mastry's business was jeopardized by customers' fear of eating seafood and increasing shrimp prices. The store filed recovery claims but, according to Mastry, was "the only place around to not receive a dime." He's still fighting for a settlement.

The Mid-Peninsula Seafood Market, another family owned business just a few miles west of Mastry's, offers a more traditional atmosphere.

In one large glass freezer, customers can choose from an array of clean cut filets, ranging from Alaskan Pollock and flounder to Atlantic salmon. Some prices, like the \$7.99 per pound tilapia, match Mastry's. Others, however, are priced significantly higher like the \$13.99 per pound snapper that Mastry's sells for \$6 less. A pound of grouper from Mid-Peninsula costs \$15.99.

Much of Mid-Peninsula's seafood is imported from other parts of the country.

On the other side of town, the Fourth Street Shrimp Store offers a slimmer variety of seafood at even higher prices. A pound of grouper at Fourth Street costs \$16.99.

Though prices vary among local establishments, St. Petersburg's chain grocery stores seem to be the most expensive of all. Both the Fresh Market and Publix sell their grouper for \$17.99 a pound.

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According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, more than 80 types of seafood are harvested off Florida's coasts. Despite this, only 2 percent of U.S. seafood comes from the gulf. The Tampa Bay Times reports that only 17 percent of seafood consumed here is domestic.

While many of St. Petersburg's seafood markets import fish from across the country, shoppers can safely assume the fish they choose from Mastry's plastic coolers came fresh from local waters.

[food](#), [mastrys](#), [seafood](#)

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