These small, silvery schooling fish are one of the most important marine species you’ll never eat – at least not directly. Though they are high in Omega-3 EPA and DHA, the abundance of small bones in their bodies make them difficult to consume. Despite their unpalatable nature, the U.S. hauls in over half a million metric tons of menhaden each year for use in meal, oil-based products and as bait for other seafood. The menhaden industry is actually two different fisheries combined – the Gulf and Atlantic species.

**Menhaden**

**Gulf Menhaden**
*Brevoortia patronus* also known as Pogy
- **LIFE SPAN:** 2-6 years
- **SIZE:** 8-12 inches
- **DIET:** Plankton
- **FECUNDITY:** 22,000-122,000 eggs/female
- **IDENTIFYING FEATURE:** Black spot on shoulder behind the gill cover, followed by row of smaller spots
- **SPAWNING:** October – April with the peak from December – March
- **LANDINGS:** 490,700 metric tons (average)
- **FISHING GEAR USED:** Purse Seine
- **HARVEST SEASON:** April – November*
  *fishery managed by individual states

**Atlantic Menhaden**
*Brevoortia tyrannus* also known as Bunker
- **LIFE SPAN:** 10-12 years
- **SIZE:** Up to 15 inches
- **DIET:** Plankton
- **FECUNDITY:** 8,000-326,000 eggs/female
- **IDENTIFYING FEATURE:** Black spot on shoulder behind the gill cover
- **SPAWNING:** March – May September – October
- **LANDINGS:** 187,000 metric tons (2015)
- **FISHING GEAR USED:** Purse Seine
- **HARVEST SEASON:** May – December*
  *fishery managed by Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission

Menhaden have the highest level of Omega-3 fatty acids of any U.S. landed fish.