

sashimi grade fish

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Sashimi Grade Fish

Fish intended to be eaten raw, as in [poke bowl](#), sashimi and crudo. The single most important thing to know about it is what the label does **not** mean.

"Sushi grade" is not a certification

There is **no legal definition** of "sushi grade" or "sashimi grade" in the United States. No agency issues it, no inspection confers it. It is a claim made by the seller, and its only real content is whatever that seller's standards happen to be.

What it *should* mean is that the fish was frozen to the FDA's parasite-destruction schedule.

The freezing rule

FDA guidance for fish to be served raw:

Temperature	Time
-20 °C / -4 °F	7 days (total time)

-35 °C / -31 °F

15 hours (in a blast freezer)

-35 °C then held at -20 °C

frozen solid, then 24 hours

This is counter-intuitive: **frozen is safer than "fresh"** for raw consumption. A domestic freezer typically runs at -18 °C and does not reliably meet the schedule, so home-freezing supermarket fish is not a substitute.

Tuna is the usual exception cited — several large tuna species are treated as low parasite risk and are exempt from the freezing requirement — but handling and cold-chain still decide whether it is safe.

Buying

Ask the counter directly: **was this frozen, and at what temperature?** A counter that cannot answer is a counter to buy cooked fish from. Prefer a dedicated fishmonger or a Japanese or Korean grocer with turnover.

Handling

Keep it at fridge temperature until the moment you cut it. **Cut it cold**, with the sharpest knife you own — a dull knife tears the muscle fibres and destroys the texture. Eat it the day you buy it.

Who should not eat it

Standard FDA advice: anyone pregnant, very young, over 65, or immunocompromised should not eat raw fish. This is not over-caution.

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