

Smaller Species of Sea Bream

Going down the scale in terms of price and quality, we now come to the smaller species of sea bream found on the market. They are almost as good as the previously mentioned varieties, yet considerably cheaper. As nearly all of them are caught just off the shore,



they usually end up on the fishmonger's slab only a few hours later. These fish are perfect for grilling; the tiniest specimens are sometimes fried, or boiled and then pickled.

Pargo without a mitre: non-clerical, but legitimate

▷ **Pargo** (*Pagrus pagrus*), the common sea bream or red porgy, gives the family of porgies (*sparidae*) its name. It can officially be termed *legítimo*, according to current nomenclature, although no one could care less about this at the market. This species, which is better suited to the average household, does not have the bishop's mitre, nor does it share weight and certainly not price with its elegant dentex cousin. (PA)



Pargo mulato, sargo and sargo bicudo



▷ **Pargo mulato** (*Plectorhinchus mediterraneus*), the rubberlip grunt, is an outsider and quite unlike either of the other *pargos*. Biologists consign it to a different fish family, while we, on account of its nice size and tasty white flesh, consign it to the oven. The good news: it is considerably cheaper than its name-sakes. (PA)

▷ **Sargo** is the name given to two species of white sea bream that are not really white, but sport dark stripes: *Diplodus sargus lineatus*, which is one of the rare cases in this book that a fish lacks an English name, and *Diplodus sargus cadenati*, or Moroccan white sea bream. In summer, both species can provide generous portions of up to 500 grams and, if completely fresh, the *sargo* is one of the best types of fish for the barbecue. (PA)

▷ **Sargo bicudo** (*Diplodus puntazzo*), the sharpsnout sea bream, has a longish nose to distinguish it from the *sargo*. Other species of this genus include the often reddish *sargo veado*, or zebra sea bream (*Diplodus cervinus cervinus*), and some not really worth mentioning. Let's just say that all sargos are excellent for grilling. (PA)

▷ **Safia** (*Diplodus vulgaris*), the common two-banded sea bream, is only deemed worthy of this name once it has grown big enough; small specimens resemble *muxarras*, which are dealt with later on,

and are sometimes also on offer by that name. With its firm, succulent flesh, the *safia* is as tasty as it is underrated. (PA)

▷ **Bica** (*Pagellus erythrinus*) is red in color and known in English as the common Pandora or Spanish sea bream, though it also swims in Italian and Portuguese waters. A blueish smudge above the eye helps distinguish the larger specimens from *pargos*, and smaller ones from other *Pagellus* species. The *bica* is, from a culinary point of view, considered an excellent grilling fish, and rightly so. (PA, PL)

▷ **Besugo** (*Pagellus acarne*), the axillary sea bream, is a perfect fish for the grill. Tastewise, you may compare or even prefer it to the *bica*, though it does not reach its size. In my opinion, the *besugo* is usually the best choice in a restaurant, as it almost always comes to your table fresh off the hook—and untaxed. (PA)

▷ **Goraz** (*Pagellus bogaraveo*), the blackspot sea bream, has a distinctive black mark behind its gills and, as an adult fish, can exceed even the Pandora in length. In Spain, this fish is known by the lovely name of *besugo del norte*. It is more like the *bica* in colour, and thanks to Andalusian fishermen, also reaches the fish markets of the Algarve. (PL)



Easily confused:
bicas and *besugos*



Goraz, unmistakable
with its black spots