

# Skrei Q & A

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## **1. What is Skrei?**

Skrei is seasonal Norwegian cod at its very best. It comes from the world's largest cod stock that lives in the Barents Sea—the Northeast Arctic cod stock (*Gadus morhua*). When the cod reaches maturity (at around 5 years old) it spends the winter months migrating to the coast of Norway to spawn. The cod spends most of its life in the nutrient-rich Barents Sea, but when it migrates to the coast, the cod is actually returning to its birthplace. When the cod comes to the coast to spawn, we call it Skrei. Skrei is therefore a Norwegian cod in the prime of its life.

Skrei is a Norwegian delicacy. Every winter for thousands of years, the Skrei has returned to its birthplace to spawn. This great phenomenon takes place only in Norway.

## **2. What is quality-labeled Skrei?**

Only first-class Skrei that is caught, processed and packed according to set and strict requirements (described in an official quality standard—NS 9406: 2013) are labeled as Skrei.

Skrei is therefore easily distinguishable from other cod products. Skrei must be mature Norwegian cod (*Gadus morhua*) that come from the Barents Sea. It is only available in the winter season (January–April) in the traditional spawning grounds along the Norwegian coast. Quality-labeled Skrei must be packed within 12 hours of being caught and kept on ice at a temperature of between 32° and 39.2°F. Whole, fresh Skrei must be individually labeled with a quality label attached to the foremost dorsal fin and be placed in boxes to which the quality label is affixed. Fresh fillets or slices of Skrei must have this label affixed to the outside of the packaging.

## **3. What is involved in acquiring the quality standard for Skrei?**

Norwegian fish reception facilities and producers who wish to sell quality-labeled Skrei must be registered with the quality labeling system at the Norwegian Seafood Council (NSC). They will then be given a quality standard with which to comply. The fish reception facilities will then be entitled to label Skrei of a good quality with the Skrei quality label. The purpose of the quality-labeling system is to help simplify market communications and to act as a tool for the NSC, fishermen, producers, suppliers, retail outlets and restaurants. The label is a guarantee that the Skrei is of a high and stable quality. An independent certification body will follow up those that are registered and ensure the products delivered are in accordance with the quality standard.

## **4. What does the word Skrei mean?**

The word Skrei comes from the Norse word *skrida* which means to wander or walk.

## **5. How does Skrei differ from coastal cod?**

Skrei differs in its appearance from other cod as it has a longer, more pointed shape and its skin has a lighter coloration. It also migrates vast distances and spends its adolescence in the Barents Sea. Some of the coastal cod live a more stationary existence on the coast and tend to have large heads compared to body size.

Skrei eats little during its migration from the Barents Sea to the Norwegian coast. This means that its stomach content is negligible compared with the coastal cod, which feeds all year round. Only the fish that are able to build up a good condition after intense feeding in the Barents Sea will start on the long journey towards the spawning grounds.

Skrei has a firm consistency and the meat is very white.

## **6. When does Skrei fishing take place?**

Skrei is a seasonal product that is only available during the winter months, from January to April. Norwegian cod from the Barents Sea is available all year, but Norwegian Skrei is only available during the winter season.

## **7. Where does Skrei fishing take place?**

Skrei is caught in the traditional spawning grounds along the Norwegian coast. Areas around Lofoten and Vesterålen are the most important fishing grounds for Skrei, but the spawning grounds extend from the Møre coast in the south to the Finnmark coast in the north.

## **8. What affects the availability of Skrei at fishmongers and restaurants?**

Availability depends first and foremost on the weather conditions. During the winter, bad weather can prevent fishermen from getting out to the fishing grounds. Climatic conditions are also a factor. Water temperatures and the salinity of the sea determine the time and place of the Skrei's arrival in the fishing grounds.

## **9. Where is quality-labeled Skrei sold?**

During the Skrei season, quality-labeled Skrei is available at fishmongers, supermarkets and restaurants. Ask your supplier for quality-labeled Skrei.

## **10. Why is quality-labeled Skrei often more expensive than coastal cod?**

Quality-labeled Skrei is caught, packed and stored according to strict criteria that are a guarantee to the customer that they are buying fresh, authentic Skrei of the highest quality.

Skrei is also a seasonal product with limited availability, and has qualities that are exceptional in terms of consistency, color and flavor. A high-quality and popular product, Skrei is always in demand, both in Norway and abroad.

## **11. Is the Skrei fishery sustainable?**

The world's largest cod stock is in the Barents Sea. The stock, which includes Skrei, is in very good condition. This cod stock is considered to be one of the best-managed cod stock in the world. Norway has a holistic view on sustainable management, which is built on long-term thinking. The cod and Skrei fishery in the Barents Sea is Norway's most important fishery in economic terms. Norway and Russia have shared responsibility for the preservation of the stock and make a joint decision on the size of the fishing quotas each year. The Norwegian share of the quota for cod in 2015 is 401,240 tonnes. This is in accordance with the recommendations of the ICES and the Fisheries Commission, the purpose of which is to extend high long-term yield and provide reasonable stability in catches from one year to the next. The management system in the Barents Sea is recognized by WWF, among others, and certified by MSC and KRAV.

## **12. What measures do we have in place to preserve the stock of Northeast Arctic cod and Skrei?**

Norway and Russia set the quotas for Northeast Arctic cod in the Barents Sea based on fish stock assessments of international working groups (ICES). The quotas are designed to ensure a healthy and reproducible cod stock. In addition, there is a fisheries management system that keeps strict control to ensure fishing is conducted legally along the Norwegian coast and in the Barents Sea.

### **13. How can we justify fishing for Skrei, keeping in mind the need to preserve cod spawning in general?**

Skrei is also taken into consideration when setting the quotas. The most important thing to consider is that enough fish survive to reproduce. The scientific advice takes into account sources of uncertainty and aims at letting more than twice the amount of spawners survive than are “needed.” The target harvest rate is set low in order to let cod realize their full growth potential.

### **14. How can we know if Skrei sold in stores and restaurants has been legally caught?**

Norwegian authorities have the fisheries’ activities under excellent control through the Coast Guard, Directorate of Fisheries and cooperatives. All vessels fishing in Norwegian waters must keep catch diaries showing which types and quantities of fish the vessel has on board at all times, as well as the catch areas in which the fish were caught.

The fish cooperatives keep a summary of how much each individual boat delivers and what each individual Norwegian boat’s remaining quota is. All Norwegian fish landed in Norway must be sold through fish cooperatives. The catch volumes are checked when the fish is brought ashore, and both boats and buyers sign to confirm the correct amount of fish is registered. The fish cooperatives report to the Directorate of Fisheries, where accounts of the quotas are kept. These quota accounts are updated once a day. The control system in Norway ensures the fish sold is legally caught.

### **15. Can Skrei be eaten with a clear conscience?**

Yes. Skrei forms an excellent basis for a nutritious meal. It is one of the world’s healthiest whitefish, and one portion of Skrei provides the recommended daily intake of omega-3 fatty acids. Skrei comes from the world’s largest cod stock, which is well managed and fished in a sustainable way, so you can eat Skrei with a clear conscience.

### **16. Does Skrei taste the same as other cod?**

The texture of quality-labeled Skrei differs from cod. The Skrei swims long distances to spawn and is therefore in excellent condition. This results in well-toned muscles and a firm texture. Since the Skrei eats little during its migration to the Norwegian coast, its stomach content is low, which has a positive effect on the meat.

Taste is difficult to gauge and everyone has his or her own preferences. Some might claim there is a big difference between Skrei and cod, while others would have difficulty distinguishing between the two products in a blind test.

### **17. How is Skrei usually prepared?**

A traditional way to prepare Norwegian Skrei is called “mølje,” which is a simple, popular dish. To prepare this dish, in separate pots, poach the fish, liver and roe in lightly salted water; then serve with boiled potatoes. Skrei tongue and roe are considered by many to be a prized delicacy.

### **18. How can you know if you are being sold quality-labeled Skrei?**

Quality-labeled Skrei can only be served fresh during winter season from January to April and must be labeled with a special quality label. The quality label is oval and features a drawing of the fish with the text “Skrei, Gadus morhua.” Whole Skrei should have this label attached to the dorsal fin. Filleted or sliced Skrei must be labeled on the outside of the packaging or in some other way at the seafood counter.

## 19. Which parts of the Skrei can you eat?

Virtually all parts of the Skrei can be eaten. In addition to the firm, white meat, the Skrei yields products such as roe, liver, tongue and jaw, which are considered by many to be delicacies.

Another popular part in Norway is the cod stomach. It is a Norwegian tradition to turn the stomach inside out and clean it in cold water. After that you fill the stomach with liver, chopped onion and salt and pepper and poach.

## 20. Are Skrei tongues different from cod tongues?

The taste is not different. However, due to the size of the fish, it is easier to remove Skrei tongues since the fish is much bigger.

## 21. How should you prepare Skrei?

Skrei can be prepared in the same way as other types of fish, whether whole, filleted or cut into slices. The liver, roe and stomach are often poached. Tongues and jaws can be poached or fried.

## 22. How long can you keep fresh Skrei?

If the fish is caught fresh from the sea, bled and then processed properly and kept at a low even temperature of around 32°F, it is still of an excellent quality up to 12 days after the catch date. If there is a breakdown in the refrigeration chain, the quality is immediately compromised. It is crucial to keep the Skrei at a constant low temperature. The Skrei quality standard (NS 9406:2013) imposes strict requirements concerning the bleeding, gutting, packing and unbroken refrigeration chain needed to ensure the fish has the best possible shelf life. Vendors are responsible for removing fish once they have exceeded their sell-by date.

## 23. What is the nutritional content of Skrei?

Skrei is one of the leanest types of fish because it stores surplus fat in the liver and not in the muscles. However, although it is a lean fish, the small amount of fat contained in Skrei is packed full of omega-3 essential fatty acids. In other words, one portion of Skrei contains your recommended daily intake of omega-3 essential fatty acids. Skrei is also rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals, and is a wholesome and healthy food. See table below:

	<b>Fat (g/100g)</b>	<b>Carbohydrate (g/100g)</b>	<b>Protein (g/100g)</b>
<b>Filleted/sliced</b>	0.4	0	22.6
<b>Roe</b>	2.9	0	21.8
<b>Liver</b>	59	0	5.5

All figures in g/100g fresh sample. More nutrient data at <http://www.matvaretabellen.no/fish-and-fish-products-g4.1>

## 24. Is Skrei healthier than cod?

Both cod and Skrei are excellent sources of protein and contain a high level of vitamin B12 and selenium. In addition, the liver contains a high level of omega-3 essential fatty acids and vitamin D, which are important for people living in areas where the sun is absent during parts of the winter.

## 25. Is the flavor impaired once the Skrei has spawned?

Before spawning, Skrei is best served as a fresh fish and as “Skreimølje” (poached with the liver and roe), as it has large muscles that produce large, succulent fillets. After spawning, the fish becomes leaner and the water content of the muscles increases. The meat becomes looser and many find it less appealing to eat compared with that of the mature Skrei before it has spawned. After spawning, Skrei is best used to produce dried cod also known as stockfish.

## 26. Why buy quality-labeled Skrei?

- Quality-labeled Skrei is caught, packed and processed in accordance with a strict quality standard (NS 9406:2013) that guarantees that the customer receives Skrei of the highest quality.
- Skrei is a seasonal product, available from January to April.
- Skrei comes from the world’s largest cod stock, which is managed sustainably. The cod stock is in very good condition.
- Skrei has large muscles resulting in excellent firmness and a white, delicate meat. These qualities make Skrei easy to process and give it an attractive appearance and a delicious flavor.
- The Skrei roe, liver, tongue, jaw and stomach are considered delicacies and are very popular in Norway.
- Skrei is rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals. One portion (150g) of Skrei provides the recommended daily intake of omega-3 essential fatty acids.

