

REMOVING

# Y BONES

FROM NORTHERN PIKE



NORTH  
**Dakota** | Game and Fish  
Be Legendary.™



## SOME HISTORY

Northern pike, North Dakota's state fish, are every bit as good on the table as other game fish, and fight better than most. Slight changes in attitude and fishing tactics can help you take advantage of tremendous angling opportunities. Tactical changes are as simple as awareness that walleye rigs with 4- to 8-pound test line and no leader will eventually be lost if a pike snaps at the bait. Losing too many rigs can be costly if you're not prepared. Beef up your line to 10- or 12-pound test and add a leader while fishing walleye in pike-inhabited waters. You may miss a few walleyes, but you won't spend near as much time tying on new hooks. (Dark-house spearfishing in most North Dakota lakes is another alternative to harvesting pike for the table.)

A change in attitude about pike is perhaps best accomplished by solving the one major annoyance associated with them – eliminating those nasty Y bones. Picking through a dozen bones to get a bite of fish is an inconvenience for many anglers who shy away from keeping pike and have eliminated them from their menu.

With a little practice, anyone can master the following process and provide delicious, boneless pike for the table for years to come.



CRAIG BHRLE

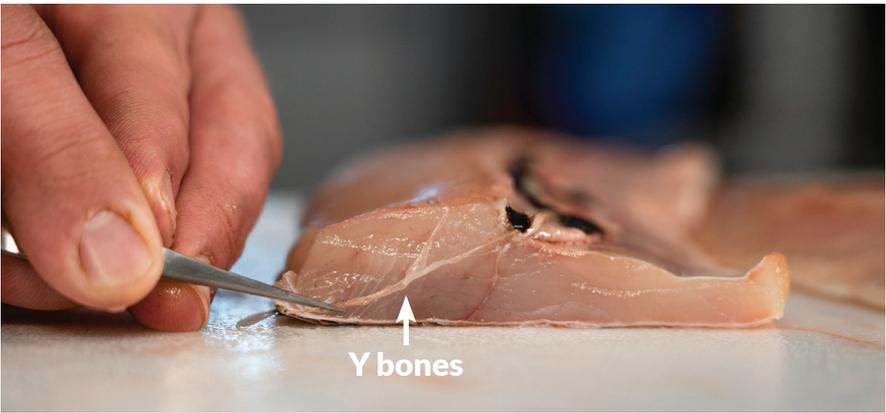
COVER PHOTO BY MIKE ANDERSON  
PIKE FILLET PHOTOS BY ASHLEY PETERSON



- 1 Remove the fillet from the body of the fish. As for any meat processing, a sharp and flexible fillet knife makes a world of difference between an easy task and a frustrating one. Keep the skin on the fillet for now, it will be removed in a later step.



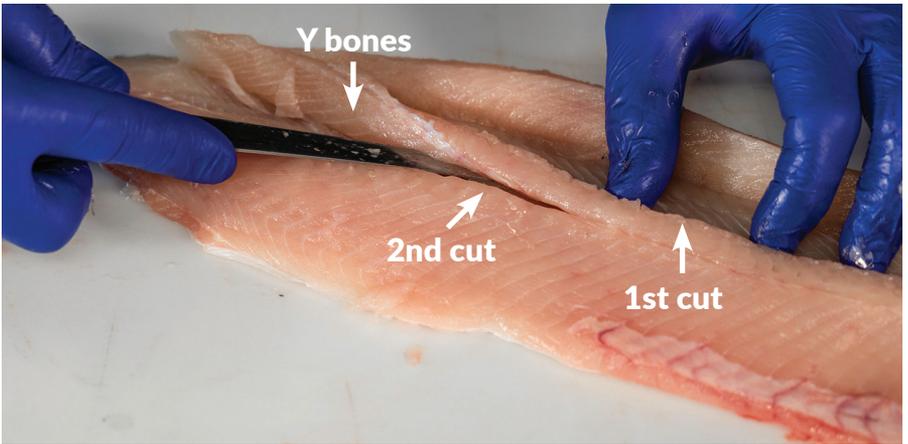
- 2 Remove the rib bones. The cut should start along the top edge of the rib cage. The knife blade should be nearly parallel to the cutting board, but angled slightly downward. Slice under the rib bones, working the blade toward the belly. Slicing under the rib bones with a little upward pressure on the knife will ensure a cut close to the rib bones so no meat is wasted.



③

The Y bones are positioned along the back of the fish as shown above. The short arm of the Y bones may be visible as little white dots, and you can feel their tips by running your finger along the fillet. To make the first cut, slice downward at 90 degrees to the cutting board along the top side of the visible Y bones. Cut down gently until you feel the knife contact the Y bones, but do not cut all the way through them. After the initial cut, turn the blade parallel to the cutting board. Using gentle downward pressure and guiding the knife along the bones, slice toward the top of the fillet. The first cut removes the meat above the Y bones, exposing them to view. (Note: you may remove this boneless portion of meat at this point if you're doing this at home, but to keep the fillet in one piece for transportation purposes, it's best to stop your cut before completely removing this section.)

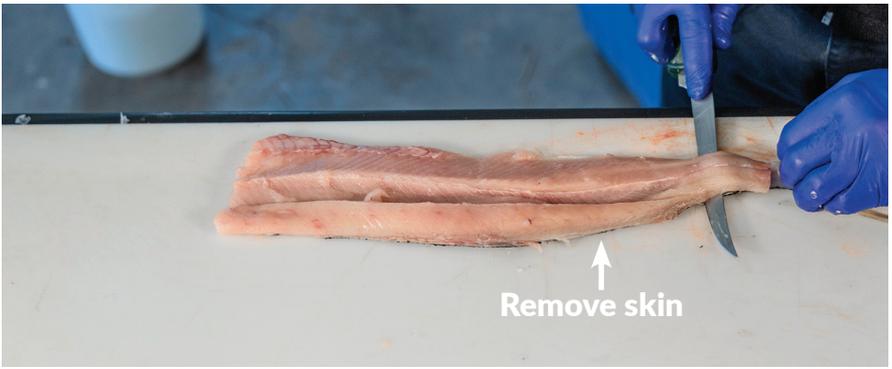




- ④ The second cut will remove the Y bones. Begin the second cut about a quarter-inch below the first cut, along the length of the fillet. Slice under the lower short arm of the Y bone, and continue to slice under the long arm of the Y bone. Similar to removing the rib cage, your knife should be roughly parallel to the cutting board, with gentle upward pressure to maintain contact with the Y bones.



- ⑤ Remove the strip of meat containing the Y bones, resulting in a boneless fillet.



- ⑥ In the last step, remove the skin from the fillet. Grasp the tail end, carefully working the knife between the fillet and the skin. Work all the way through to the end. Discard the skin and rinse your fillet in water to prepare for cooking or packaging.

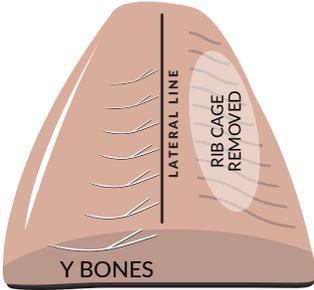


- ⑦ Congratulations, you have successfully removed the Y bones from a delicious northern pike fillet. Repeat this process to remove the Y bones and skin for the other side. This technique produces excellent boneless pike, but like any filleting, it may take some practice to master. Until you are more comfortable removing the bones, we recommend practicing at home.

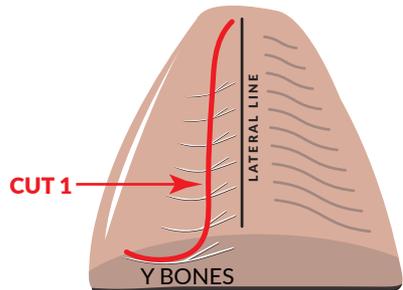
# ILLUSTRATION OF NORTHERN PIKE Y BONE REMOVAL

1

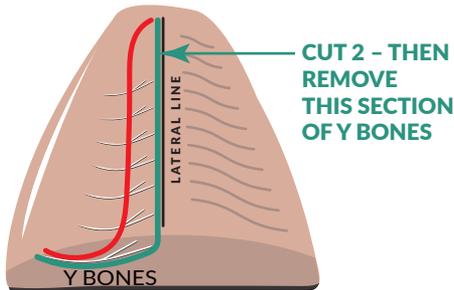
TAIL SIDE



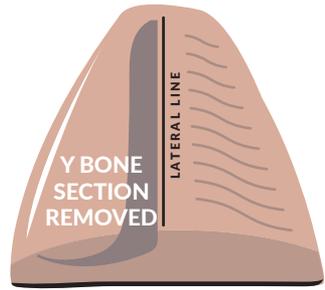
2



3



4



REMOVE SKIN

(REPEAT STEPS FOR OTHER SIDE OF FILLET)

Check out our detailed video of pike Y bones at  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDUgQCAIUHg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDUgQCAIUHg)



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WHERE TO FIND  
**PIKE**  
IN NORTH DAKOTA

Check out the fishing tab on the Game and Fish  
Department's website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov) to find stocking  
reports, lake contour maps and other useful  
information for northern pike fishing.

[gf.nd.gov/fishing](http://gf.nd.gov/fishing)  
Email: [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov)

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