

Rainbow Trout

NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES

The rainbow trout is the best-known species of trout in the world. Beautiful iridescent colors, most vivid during spawning times, have given rise to this species' common name.

The flesh is normally orange-pink in color due to a carotenoid pigment, astaxanthin, found in microalgae in the diet of trout. Synthetic astaxanthin can be added to feed used to raise farmed trout.



Trout aquaculture dates back over 400 years in Europe and over 160 years in the United States. In 2000, rainbow trout aquaculture accounted for 10 percent of the \$1 billion in farmed fish production in this country.

Native to North American rivers draining into the Pacific Ocean, trout are now farmed across the United States for food and for sport. North Carolina is the second largest producer of rainbow trout after Idaho. They are grown in earthen or concrete, rectangular raceways supplied with clean, flowing water. Without a good source of water, trout farming is impossible.

In North Carolina, [Sunburst Trout Company](#) is among the top rainbow trout producers along the eastern seaboard. Dick Jennings, a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, began raising trout commercially on his grandfather's land in the western part of the state in 1948.

Initially Jennings began supplying trout to recreational fishermen, but as the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids became better known, Mr. Jennings began selling to upscale supermarket chains along the East Coast and to high-end restaurants.

Besides boneless fillets, Sunburst also produces caviar, trout sausage, smoked trout spread, cold and hot smoked fillets and encrusted fillets for retail and mail-order customers.

For more information on rainbow trout production in North Carolina, go to [NC Department of Agriculture and Consumers Services](#).

Contributed by Barry Nash