

# How to Dress and Fillet Lionfish

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In his manual, ***Invasive Lionfish: A Guide to Control and Management*** — available at [lionfish.gcfi.org/manual](http://lionfish.gcfi.org/manual) — James Morris explains how to dress lionfish. The ecologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration advises using puncture-proof gloves when handling a lionfish with its spines intact to avoid being stung.

## • Photo 1

To clip the dorsal spines, hold the fish by the head. With heavy kitchen shears, start cutting at the rear of the fish and work forward. This prevents the spines from lying flat along the back. Clip only the first spine of each pelvic fin and the first three of the anal fin. The remaining are rays and are not venomous. It is not necessary to clip the tail or pectoral fins.

Joyce Taylor explains how to fillet fish in her seafood resource book, ***Mariner's Menu: 30 Years of Fresh Seafood Ideas***, published by North Carolina Sea Grant.

## • Photo 2

Remove the scales with a fish scaler or the dull side of a knife.

## • Photo 3

Cut around the pelvic fins and remove viscera and all black membranes and blood, particularly the blood streak running along the backbone.

## • Photo 4

Rinse the fish well — with attention to the belly cavity — under cold, running water.

## • Photo 5

Cut the flesh just above the tail.

## • Photo 6

At the pectoral fin, just behind the head, cut into the flesh at a 45-degree angle toward the head until the knife reaches the backbone.

## • Photo 7

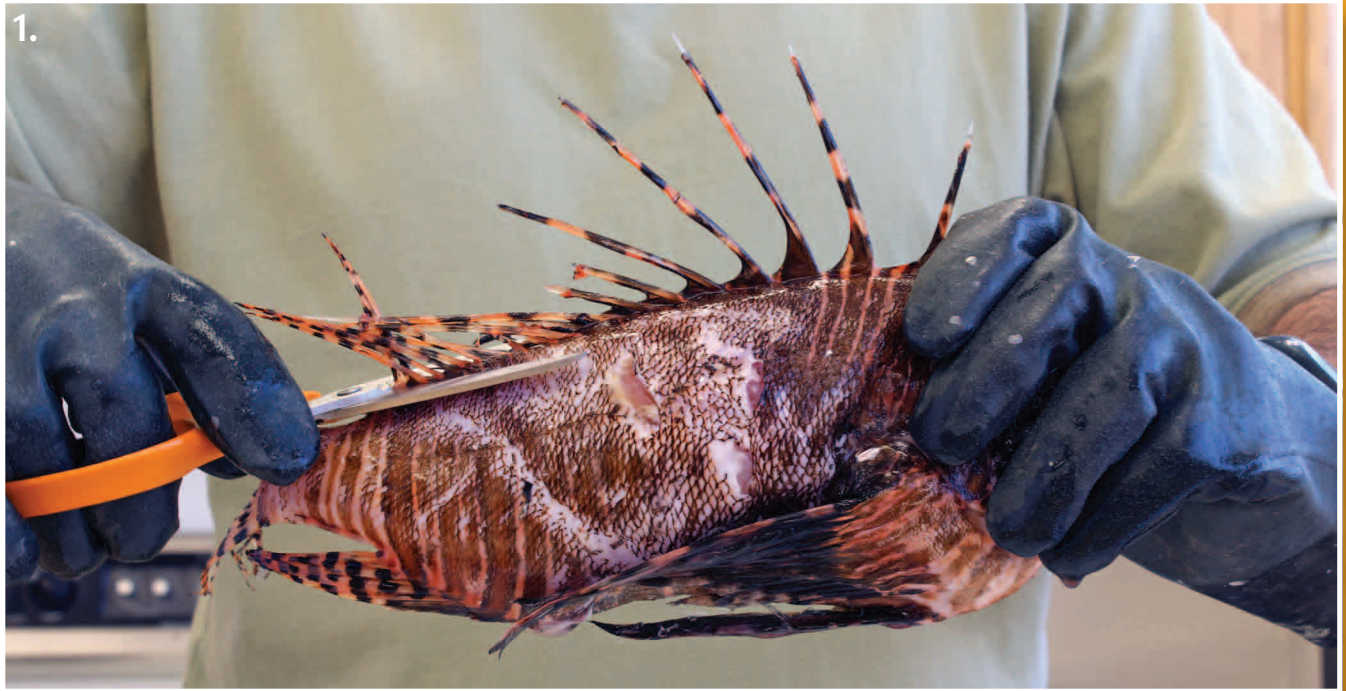
Turn the knife and follow the backbone to the tail, keeping the knife against the backbone. Or, if you prefer, reverse this and cut from the tail to the head. Turn the fish over and repeat on the other side. Always direct the knife away from you when filleting.

## • Photo 8

Remove the fillet and rinse it well under cold, running water.

## • Photo 9

The skin is edible, so it can be left on the fillet or removed.



Photos by Vanda Lewis