

Aunt Julia's True Stories

Philippine Fresh Water Fishes

The Mudfish or Dalag

THE most important true fresh-water fishes are mudfish or *dalag*, climbing perch or *martinico*, and the catfish or *hito*, and *handuli*.

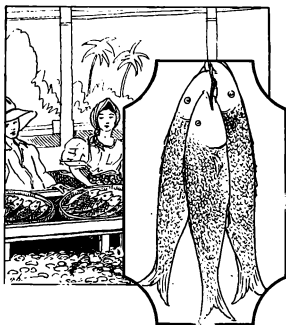
The *dalag* is the most highly prized of the fresh-water fishes. It is well known as it is found throughout the Philippines. It is very much liked by people in Central Luzon, but it is not eaten by many Visayans and Bicolanos. It is not so popular because of its dark gray color and because of the fact that it is found even in ponds and mudholes. But its flesh has a fine flavor if the fish is thoroughly cleaned and well prepared. Ask your mother how she dresses the *dalag*. Does she simply remove the scales? How is the skin whitened? It is generally believed that two broad scales under the fins, when not removed, give a strong fishy smell to the cooked *dalag*. Find out if this is true. You obtain *dalag* from the market strictly fresh. When your mother buys a *dalag*, what does the seller do before the fish is handed to your mother?

Dalag boiled in water with ginger and white squash, *pechay*, or *upo* makes a very popular dish among the Tagalogs and Pampangos. It is eaten with tomato sauce mixed with a kind of soya bean cake called *misó*. Have you tried it?

Dalag is different from other fishes in that it does not breathe by the gills alone. Do you notice a cavity or hollow space in its head? The fish goes to the surface of the water for air. It is taken into the cavity.

Dalag are very hardy; that is, they can live under unfavorable conditions. Sometimes they travel through wet grassy or muddy ground until they reach ponds and flooded rice fields. The widespread belief that they are buried under sun-baked mud is not true.

How is *dalag* caught in your locality?



The Climbing Perch or Martinico

The *martinico* has become famous because of its ability to live out of the water, to move about on the land, and even to climb the rough trunk of certain palms.

The flesh is good, but the fish is small and has many hard bones. It therefore does not command a good price.

Like the *dalag*, the climbing perch takes in air through the cavity in the head and through the gills. It can live even in semi-liquid mud. It is said that it can stay out of water as long as six days if kept in a moist earthen jar.

The Catfishes

Hito is a catfish that lives only in fresh water. Why do you think it is called catfish? It is not very popular because of its slimy skin. It has to be thoroughly cleaned and carefully prepared.

The *handuli* is another catfish. It is found in both fresh and salt water. Many people have a strong dislike for *handuli*. Find out why. In many places far from the sea, however, these fresh-water fishes are the only fish that can be obtained fresh.

LEARNING THE USE OF NEW WORDS

Find out if you remember the words you learned last month by supplying the names of the objects in this story.

Every night my sister takes a warm bath. She wears a fresh night gown which she gets from her _____. Then she sits before her _____. She looks at herself in the _____. She passes a _____ through her hair. She uses a _____ afterwards. With a _____ she powders

her face. She files her nails with a _____. While filing her nails, she notices that her hair falls over her eyes. So she gets a _____ and cleans her hair for a while, then she braids it and puts it up with the help of a _____ and a _____. After this, she gets a book from her _____ and reads for an hour. She takes care that the light from the electric _____ passes her left shoulder. The pink _____ of her lamp softens the light. At ten o'clock, she goes to bed.