

*CAVIAR*

**THE RITZ-CARLTON**

SARASOTA

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**Caviar**

## **Introduction:**

### **I. Origins:**

#### **Etymology: from Italian Caviale and from Turkish Khavyar**

1. Salted unfertilized sturgeon eggs.
2. Sturgeon only found in the Northern Hemisphere. A large and gentle toothless fish. With no scales but bony plates called scutes. Salt water fish that go to fresh water to spawn but do not expire like salmon
3. There are 27 species of sturgeon but only four are used for their elite Caviar

### **II. History As ancient as the Egyptians**

1. Egyptian drawings depict workers salting roe since before the 700 BC century
2. Carthaginians depicted a sturgeon on their gold coins in the 600 BC century
3. Aristotle wrote about caviar in 400 BC century and the poet Ovid called it “A Noble Fish”
4. Romans celebrated sturgeon for its texture like veal, roe and swim bladder for its isinglass substance to clarify wine. They served with great Pomp and Circumstance.

### **III. Russian Roots:**

1. During the Middle Ages consumption in Western Europe stopped due to wars and over fishing. Except in the East, specially around the Caspian Sea.
2. In 1280 Christianity encouraged the consumption of fish for the fasting weeks of lent (one should consume insipid food with Rye Kvass and granular caviar.
3. Since 1532 it was on the Czars table at every meal.
4. 1675 it was exported to the rest of Europe with the exclusive authority of the Czars. It became a luxury food item.

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5. Italians loved it served with vinegar, onions and grilled bread.
6. Napoleon Bonaparte served sturgeon like the ROMANS had done and celebrated every time.
7. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it had been over fished and pollution had depleted it so much that you could not find it in the rivers of Europe except for some areas of the Gironde River in France..
8. After 1920 with the exile of the Russian Princess for Russia to Europe it was introduced back into parties of the European Elite.
9. In 1925 Cesar Ritz owner of the Ritz in Paris, London, Madrid and Barcelona put it on his restaurant menus. Thus becoming a permanent item to this day.

### **III. Caviar in the USA**

#### **A. Sturgeon was plentiful in the Hudson, Delaware and other small rivers.**

1. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century a salty American caviar was served in New York Bars like peanuts are today. (to encourage drinking).
2. Hudson River Sturgeon was called “Albany Beef” an inexpensive fish.
3. Since Caviar was not very popular most of it was exported to Europe
4. In 1895-96 US caviar exported more than Russia.
5. By 20<sup>th</sup> Century the Delaware and Hudson Rivers Sturgeon were depleted.

### **IV. Harvesting Process**

1. Very Delicate Process
2. Fish are caught alive, checked for gender and harvested very gently
3. The roe, fish eggs are qualified, measured, graded by color and size
4. Then slated and borax.
5. Malossol Process (Russian for lightly salted) 2.8-3% up to 10% salt.

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6. Salted for 2-4 minutes and then drained washing very carefully as to not destroy the eggs.
7. It is then packed in tins: 1.8Kg.drum like tins
  - a. Beluga- blue label tin
  - b. Osetra- yellow label tin
  - c. Sevruga- red label tin
8. Temperature 32-35 degrees Fahrenheit.
9. Can be stored up to one year in its original tin.
10. Good Caviar is not Fishy, acidic, tart, or slimy with a light gloss

**V. Sturgeon Types used for their Caviar (the roe can be up to 25% of the fish body weight)**

1. **BELUGA:** Like butter, smooth, rich and delicate. It takes 20 years to reach adulthood. Can live up to 100 years and can reach 16 feet long and weigh a ton. Its Roe is grey to black in color
2. **OSETRA:** Hazelnut in taste, fruity complexity, like extra virgin olive oil. Matures at 10-12 years of age, 7 feet long and eggs are smaller than Beluga. Color is blackish to golden and greenish tints.
3. **SEVRUGA:** Like sea breeze taste, citrus in flavor. Smallest of the sturgeons, 5 feet long, matures at 7 years of age and is very beautiful looking. It has the smallest eggs and takes salt more intensely thus making it very flavorful.
4. **SHIP:** Similar to Osetra and Sevruga.
5. **KALUGA:** Chinese Sturgeon, smaller than Beluga and darker black color. Nutty flavor. Also called Chinese Imperial or Beluga Prime.
6. **WHITE STURGEON:** California farmed, like Osetra size, and delicate taste.
7. **Paddlefish:** From Mississippi River basin, refreshing taste.

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**VI. Other:**

1. Salmon Caviar
2. Lumpfish Caviar
3. Cod, Flying Fish, Trout Roe