

Step 1)

Cut down to the backbone (not through it) just below the gill, then slide the knife along the backbone to the tail leaving the fillet attached at the tail.

Cut out the lower rib bones by letting the knife slide under the bones to the bottom of the fillet



Step 2)

To remove Y-bones find the lateral line that runs through the center of the filet (it sort of bisects the upper and lower portion). Once found, run the tip of a very sharp knife down the center line on an angle toward the upper portion of the filet.



Step 3)

You should feel bones, stay under them. Cut down to the skin but not through it.



Step 4)

Next feel with your fingers along the upper portion of the filet; you should feel little ends of bone that stick through the filet. These little bumps of bones are where you cut them from the backbone when you split the side.



Step 5)

Take your knife (it has to be sharp) and cut the meat from the top side of that line of bones again toward the top of the fillet. The knife should literally slide along the bones. It is weird, but you'll notice that the closer you get to the head, the closer the bones run to the edge of the fillet and will result in less saved meat near the head. You are literally cutting (saving) the upper meat. This cut literally works on top of the bones, while your center cut in the upward direction (mentioned earlier) works under the bones.



Step 6)

When you have finished with the cut, pick up that portion to that was cut out (between the cuts) and strip it back along the fillet from the head back to the tail. This section contains all of the Y-bones, so throw it away with the entrails. See Exhibits VI and VII.



Step 7)

Continued from the above picture



Step 8)

Then using the tail as your handle, skin the fillet. You should have a skinny strip of meat that was on the upper portion of the filet (delicious by the way, it is like a fish stick), and the lower portion. It looks like two strips of meat joined near the end of the tail. It looks like you waste a lot of meat, but you really don't. It sure makes a world of difference when it comes to eating. See Exhibits VIII and IX.



Step 9) Continue from above picture

Flip the fish over and repeat the process. When you rinse the fillets, you can easily feel any missed bones (shouldn't be any...but).

Cleaning and Fileting Northern Pike

Northern pike are often avoided by many fisherman because when they are cleaned there is a pesky Y-bone left in the filet. This sharp Y-bone then gets caught in the throat of the person consuming the fish. The solution to this problem is to remove the y-bone. The procedure below, and accompanying graphic, will make this task fairly easy for anyone that already knows how to filet a walleye or bass.

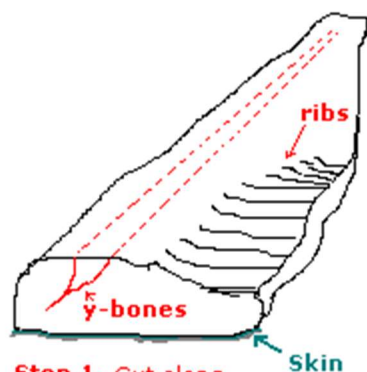
Step 1 - Lay the pike on its side. Then cut behind the gills down to the backbone. Turn the knife and then cut along the backbone, as close as possible, all the way to the tail. Remove the filet with the skin intact. This is exactly the same way you would start fileting a bass or walleye.

Step 2 - Remove the ribs. This is done by running the filet knife under the ribs from the middle of the fish, cutting out the ribs with the knife as close to the ribs as possible. This is also the way you would remove the rib section from a bass or walleye filet.

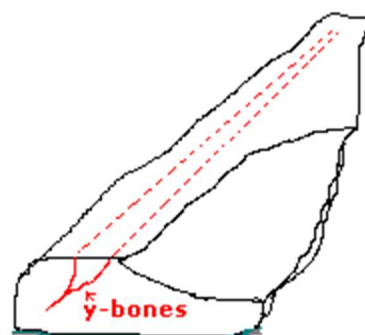
Step 3 - If you look closely, you will see 2 faint lines of bones. (See red dashed lines in graphic below). These lines are where the y-bones were connected to the spine. Locate the line of bones at the top and cut away a strip of meat as shown in Step 3 of the graphic below. You are removing this strip in a manner similar to removing the rib section. Try to get as close to the y-bone as possible since you will be saving this strip and want to get as much meat as possible on it.

Step 4 - You now need to make a cut on the other side of the y-bone and cut the y-bone section away. This is also similar to removing the rib section. Get as close to the y-bone as possible so as to minimize wasted meat. You will discard this y-bone section. You would get quite a mouth-full of bones if you ate this section!

Step 5 - Remove the skin from the larger piece of filet. You do this by running the knife in between the skin and the meat, sliding the knife as you cut. I find it easiest to start at the tail end. This again is the same way you would remove the skin from a bass or walleye filet. I like to leave the skin on until this last step since it helps hold the fillet together as you remove the y-bone section.



Step 1- Cut along backbone and remove a fillet the same way you would remove a walleye fillet. Leave the skin on for now.



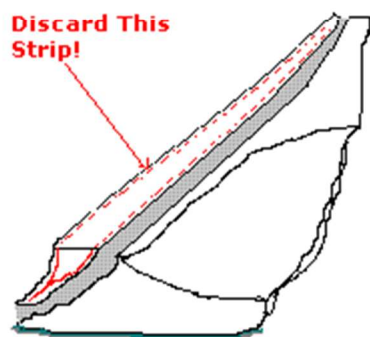
Step 2- Cut just under the ribs and remove the rib bones. Again, this is the same way you would remove ribs from a walleye fillet.



Save This Strip!

Step 3- Cut away a strip on the top side of the y-bone. Save this strip.

Discard This Strip!



Step 4- Cut away the strip containing the y-bones. Discard this strip.

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From each side you will get 2 boneless pieces!

Step 5 - Remove the skin by sliding the knife between the fillet and skin, the same way you remove the skin from a walleye fillet.

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