



Protein in Tilapia | A Practical Breakdown

Not every fish is worth building a meal plan around, but tilapia is one of the few that consistently earns a spot on high-protein grocery lists. It's affordable, it's forgiving to cook, and it delivers a protein count that rivals chicken without the extra fat that comes with red meat or fattier fish. If you've been asking [how much protein in tilapia](#) before adding it to your cart, this article lays out the exact numbers, explains why they shift depending on how you prep the fish, and shows how tilapia stacks up against the other proteins already in your rotation.

The Number You're Looking For

A cooked 3.5-ounce (100g) portion of tilapia contains about **26 grams of protein** and roughly 128 calories. Scale that up to a full fillet, usually somewhere between 4 and 6 ounces once cooked, and you're getting **29 to 44 grams of protein** in a single piece of fish. For reference, that's close to what you'd get from an equivalent portion of chicken breast, minus a good chunk of the calories you'd pick up from salmon or beef.

That's the protein in tilapia in one sentence. Everything below fills in the "why" and the "how" behind that number.

Why Tilapia Is Worth Tracking in the First Place

Fish nutrition gets a lot of attention because protein sources aren't created equal; some come loaded with saturated fat, others are expensive, and plenty just take too long to cook on a weeknight. Tilapia checks a different set of boxes:

- Complete protein, meaning it supplies all nine important amino acids
- Naturally low in fat compared to red meat and fattier fish
- Mild enough to pair with almost any seasoning, marinade, or sauce
- Ready in 10-15 minutes from raw to plate
- Consistently one of the more affordable fish options at the grocery store

If you're new to cooking tilapia from scratch, our guide on [how to make whole tilapia](#) covers the basics start to finish. And since protein rarely gets tracked in isolation, our calories in fish tilapia article is worth pairing with the numbers here.

Protein Content of Tilapia: Raw, Cooked and Everything Between

The protein content of tilapia looks different depending on whether you're checking a raw fillet or a cooked one, and understanding why avoids a lot of confusion on the nutrition label.

State	Protein (per 100g)	Calories (per 100g)
Raw tilapia	20g	96 kcal
Cooked tilapia	26g	128 kcal

That jump from 20g to 26g isn't extra protein appearing out of nowhere; it's water weight leaving the fish as it cooks, which concentrates the remaining nutrients per 100 grams. The actual protein you're eating is roughly the same either way; it just reads differently on paper depending on which stage you're measuring.

Sizing It Up by Fillet

Fillet Size (Cooked)	Protein	Calories
4 oz (113g)	29g	145 kcal

5 oz (142g)	37g	182 kcal
6 oz (170g)	44g	218 kcal

Since fillets aren't sold in standardized sizes, this table is the most useful reference if you're trying to hit a specific protein target for a meal. A kitchen scale brings the guesswork out of it.

Does Cooking Method Change the Protein Total?

Not dramatically. Heat doesn't strip protein out of fish the way it can degrade certain vitamins, so the protein in tilapia stays fairly stable across cooking methods. What does shift is everything surrounding the fish:

- **Grilled, baked, air-fried, or poached:** roughly 25-26g protein per 100g, with the least added fat
- **Pan-seared in oil or butter:** about the same protein, plus whatever fat gets absorbed during cooking
- **Breaded and deep-fried:** closer to 20-22g protein per 100g, because the breading adds calories and carbs without contributing protein

If your goal is the leanest possible protein per bite, skip the batter. A glazed, oven-baked approach like our [honey baked soy sauce tilapia](#) keeps the protein density high while still delivering plenty of flavor.

How Tilapia Measures Up Against Other Proteins

Numbers only mean so much without context. Here's how a 100-gram cooked serving of tilapia compares to other common proteins:

Protein Source	Protein (per 100g)	Calories	Fat
Tilapia	26g	128 kcal	3g
Chicken breast	31g	165 kcal	3.6g
Salmon	25g	208 kcal	13g
Tuna (canned)	26g	116 kcal	1g
Shrimp	24g	99 kcal	1.4g
85% lean ground beef	26g	250 kcal	15g

Two things stand out here. First, tilapia and salmon deliver nearly identical protein, but tilapia comes in at roughly a quarter of the fat and 60% of the calories. Second, compared to ground beef, tilapia matches the protein count while cutting the calories almost in half useful if you're trying to keep total intake down without sacrificing protein.

Farmed Tilapia vs Wild-Caught: Any Difference in Protein?



Since the vast majority of tilapia sold commercially is farm-raised, it's worth addressing directly: farming method doesn't meaningfully change protein content. Both farmed and wild tilapia generally land in that same 20-26 grams per 100 grams range. The real differences between the two show up in the fat profile; wild tilapia tends to carry a slightly different balance of omega fatty acids, but if protein is your main concern, there's no need to seek out one over the other.

Matching Tilapia to Specific Nutrition Goals

Muscle building: A 6-ounce fillet supplying around 40 grams of protein fits neatly into the 25-40g per-meal range often recommended for muscle repair and growth, especially post-workout.

Weight management: High protein paired with a lower calorie and fat count makes tilapia genuinely filling, which can help prevent overeating later in the day.

Heart-conscious eating: With low saturated fat, tilapia works as a reasonable red-meat substitute, even if its omega-3 content trails behind fattier fish like salmon.

Budget meal prep: Tilapia usually costs less per gram of protein than salmon, shrimp, or grass-fed beef, which adds up quickly across a week of meals for a family.

Rounding Out a Tilapia Meal Without Losing the Protein Focus

A few simple additions can boost the [total protein of a tilapia](#) dinner:

- A poached or fried egg on the side adds about 6 grams of protein
- Swapping white rice for quinoa adds roughly 4 grams more protein per cooked cup
- A scoop of black beans or lentils layers in plant-based protein
- Pairing tilapia with shrimp for a surf-and-turf style plate raises the total protein significantly

For a spiced, comforting option that keeps protein high without frying, our [fish curry](#) recipe simmers white fish in a flavorful sauce instead.

A Simple High-Protein Plate

1. One 6-ounce grilled or baked tilapia fillet: about 40g protein
2. ½ cup cooked quinoa: about 4- 5 g protein
3. A side of roasted vegetables: about 2- 3 g protein
4. Olive oil or avocado for healthy fat



That's roughly 45-50 grams of protein in one sitting, typically under 600 calories. For more meals built around lean proteins, our [quick dinner ideas for family](#) collection has plenty of options to rotate in alongside tilapia.

What Else Tilapia Contributes Beyond Protein

- **Selenium** for thyroid support and antioxidant function
- **Vitamin B12** for nerve health and red blood cell production
- **Phosphorus** for bone strength and energy metabolism
- **Potassium** for fluid balance
- **Lower mercury levels** than large predatory fish, making it suitable for frequent meals

Habits That Undercut Tilapia's Protein Value

- **Thick breading** adds bulk without adding protein, lowering the overall ratio
- **Deep-frying** introduces extra fat that doesn't serve muscle or satiety goals
- **Skipping portion measurement**, fillet sizes vary too much to eyeball accurately
- **Overcooking** doesn't remove protein, but dry fish often gets eaten in smaller portions, which lowers total protein consumed

Wrapping Up

The core numbers are simple to remember: about 26 grams of protein per 100-gram cooked serving, and up to 44 grams in a larger fillet, with very little variation based on whether the fish is farmed or wild. The one thing that does move the needle is preparation: batter and deep-frying dilute that protein density, while baking, grilling, poaching, and air-frying preserve it.

To put these numbers to work, start with our guide on how to make whole tilapia, check the full nutritional picture in [calories in tilapia](#), or try it prepared as honey-baked soy sauce tilapia or a warming fish curry. For more high-protein dinners to round out your week, browse our quick dinner ideas for family collection.

Frequently Asked Questions(FAQs)

How much protein is in tilapia?

A 100-gram cooked serving of tilapia has approximately 26 grams of protein, making it one of the leaner high-protein fish available at most grocery stores.

How much protein is in a tilapia fillet?

Depending on size, a cooked tilapia fillet (4-6 ounces) contains between 29 and 44 grams of protein.

Is there a difference in protein between raw and cooked tilapia?

Raw tilapia has about 20 grams of protein per 100 grams, while cooked tilapia shows closer to 26 grams per 100 grams, a difference driven by moisture loss during cooking rather than any real change in protein amount.

How does tilapia compare to chicken in protein content?

Chicken breast has slightly more protein per 100 grams (about 31g) than tilapia (about 26g), though both are considered excellent lean protein sources.