# Adding Some Life to Your Inhabitants' Diet

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There are a variety of quality prepared foods currently available that satisfy the nutritional needs of both fish and invertebrates. However, supplementing the diet with live food can provide additional nutritional and behavioral benefits.

## Improve water quality

The availability of food is uncertain in the wild but in most aquariums, overfeeding is the norm. Consequently, poor water conditions can result due to decaying, uneaten food. In general, live food is less likely to be consumed in one feeding, allowing a longer time frame for foraging without seriously compromising water quality.

## Recreate natural feeding behavior and environment

Due to this extended foraging period presented by live foods, many fish and invertebrates will become more engaged in the feeding process, spending the day actively pursuing the food. By sparking the natural feeding behavior, the addition of live food can stimulate natural instincts and introduce a dimension of interest and involvement for your fish not possible with prepared foods alone.

## Better nutrition

Live food can also be used as a method of delivering additional nutrients through a process called "gut-loading" or indirect enrichment. Nutritional benefits are transferred from one feeding level to the next via the food chain. Live food can be enriched with vitamin supplements, providing a means of delivering additional nutrients to fish that refuse prepared foods.

## Grow Your Own Copepods!

We're pleased to offer six new zooplankton starter cultures for use in marine aquariums and ornamental fish breeding. Experiment with different combinations of pods for different types of feeders: Mandarins and Seahorses, Anthias and Gobies, NPS Corals and Gorgonians, Acropora, Crinoids, Basket Stars, and more.

Copepod cultures can be introduced and maintained in aquariums several ways. Harpacticoids can be added to a sump or refugium preferably with a suitable substrate such as rock, sand or algae. It is suggested that the protein skimmer be turned off



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when adding the culture. Calanoids can be added to the main tank, most effectively at night when they won't be quickly predated by fish. Populations can be periodically enhanced by adding more culture as needed, typically about once a month. ReefPods can live together so multiple species may be added at the same time. Pod populations can be fed in culture or in tanks with PhycoPure Copepod Blend, a specially prepared microalgae feed. All of the AlgaGen ReefPods are herbivorous species of copepods that prefer the tropical temperatures of reef tanks.

Copepods can also be grown outside of the aquarium system in a culture vessel and then harvested to feed the aquarium. Pod culture can be tricky, some are easier than others, but with some simple equipment and a little dedication pod cultures are achievable.

## Raising brine shrimp as a live food option

Though there is a wide range of live food available, the most commonly cultivated is brine shrimp. There are a variety of brine shrimp hatcheries with specific hatching instructions but they share common elements. The basic elements include a hatchery kit, brine shrimp eggs, saltwater, air pump, and a light source. By providing proper aeration, water movement, a temperature between 75-80ºF, and a constant light source, the brine shrimp eggs (cysts) will hatch within 24-48 hours. The newly hatched brine shrimp can be removed with a clean turkey baster or a fine mesh net. As a supplement to quality prepared foods, live food such as brine shrimp can provide nutritional and behavioral benefits to young fish, seahorses, corals and other filter feeders.

## Feeder Shrimp

Another convenient live food option is small feeder shrimp. Readily available in both freshwater and marine varieties, feeder shrimp can be purchased in bulk and kept easily in an aquarium of at least 10 gallons. Housed in an established rearing-aquarium, feeder shrimp are relatively easy to breed if kept in large enough groups. Provide plenty of hiding places and mature substrate to help encourage breeding. Freshwater Ghost Shrimp are an excellent food source for both fresh and saltwater fish. However they must be kept in a freshwater environment since they are freshwater shrimp. Saltwater Mysid Shrimp are an excellent food source for many types of saltwater fish. Since these are marine shrimp, they provide a more complete diet specific to marine fish and can also be kept in the main aquarium or refugium.



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