



## **Sustainable Seafood Business Practices**

Growing global demand for seafood is depleting fish populations around the world and threatening the health of our oceans. With nearly 76% of the world's fisheries fully fished or overfished, scientists are worried that the oceans cannot keep up with the growing demand. Other environmental impacts are also taking a toll: unintended catch of sea turtles, seabirds, marine mammals and other sea life; seafloor damage from some types of fishing gear; pollution and marine debris; and loss of coastal wetlands to create fish farms.

The good news is that environmentally friendly fisheries and fish farms do exist, and they deserve your support. Restaurants, retailers and other businesses have an important role to play in supporting the health of the oceans. You can use your purchasing power to buy and demand seafood that is caught or farmed in an environmentally responsible way.

As the gatekeepers to the seafood supply, your purchasing decisions make a real difference. In the United States, **67% of seafood by dollar value is sold through restaurants**, and an additional 24% is sold by retailers as fresh or frozen product.

By following sustainable seafood business practices, you're using purchasing power to support environmentally responsible fisheries and fish farms. We've developed this document to help you create a program that's right for your business.

It can be difficult to figure out which kinds of seafood are environmentally responsible and which are not. *Seafood Watch*, a program of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, researches and analyzes popular wild-caught and farmed seafood items and shares its seafood recommendations, primarily in the form of regionally specific *Seafood Watch* consumer pocket guides (available online at [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org).) The aquarium follows these guidelines and purchases sustainable seafood for its own restaurant and food service operations. We encourage you to do the same, and we've created a number of tools just for businesses to help you. They're outlined below, and are available in greater detail online, or through the Seafood Watch office, 1-887-229-9990.

- I. Using the Seafood Watch Pocket Guide**
- II. Sourcing Seafood**
- III. Finding Alternatives**
- IV. Labeling your Menu**
- V. Educating your Staff**
- VI. Staying Informed**
- VII. Sharing your Commitment with your Customers**
- VIII. Implementing your Sustainable Seafood Business Practices**

## I. Using the *Seafood Watch* Pocket Guide

*Seafood Watch* consumer pocket guides have been developed for six regions of the United States based on seafood available in different regions and the unique culinary preferences across the country. Pocket guides are currently available, free of charge, for Hawaii, West Coast, Southeast, Midwest, Northeast, and Southwest regions; as well as a generic National pocket guide. (Spanish-language versions are available for the West Coast, Southwest and National guides.)

The pocket guides offer seafood recommendations in three categories:

- **Best Choices:** These fish are abundant, well managed, and caught or farmed in environmentally friendly ways.
- **Good Alternatives:** These are an option, but there are some concerns with how they're caught or farmed, or with the health of their habitat because of other human impacts.
- **Avoid:** Avoid these for now. These fish come from sources that are overfished, caught or farmed in ways that harm other marine life or the environment. If you do nothing else, steering clear of Avoid items will have a positive impact on the health of the oceans.

We encourage consumers, retailers and restaurateurs alike to purchase seafood from the **Best Choices** and **Good Alternatives** categories. Our recommendations are updated twice a year, in January and July. Detailed background information for each recommendation is available online at [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org); click the “Browse All Seafood” link. You can also click on the “What We Do” section to learn about how we develop our seafood recommendations.

## II. Sourcing Seafood

Using the *Seafood Watch* pocket guide is the first step to identifying the most environmentally responsible sources of seafood. The next step is to seek more specific information on:

- Where your fish comes from?
- Was it farmed or wild-caught?
- How was farmed or caught?

Finding answers can be tricky. Your seafood purveyor may not always be willing, or able, to answer every question, so it's up to you to work with them, ask the necessary questions and demand seafood that meets your standards. Here are a few helpful tips to help you get started.

1. Use the *Seafood Watch* recommendations and choose only items on our green and yellow lists. Avoid those on the red list.

Be sure to ask questions to be sure you're getting the seafood you want.

Note: When using the *Seafood Watch* pocket guide, it is important that you read all categories, as seafood may appear in more than one column based on where it is from, how it is caught, etc.

## Sample pocket guide:

BEST CHOICES	GOOD ALTERNATIVES	AVOID	Support Ocean-Friendly Seafood
Arctic Char (farmed) Barramundi (US farmed) Catfish (US farmed) Clams (farmed) Cod: Pacific (Alaska longline)* Crab: Dungeness, Stone Halibut: Pacific* Herring: Atlantic/Sardines Lobster: US (US) Mussels (farmed) Oysters (farmed) Pollock (Alaska wild)* Salmon (Alaska wild)* Scallops: Bay (farmed) Striped Bass (farmed or wild*) Sturgeon, Caviar (farmed) Tilapia (US farmed) Trout: Rainbow (farmed) Tuna: Albacore (British Columbia, US troll/pole) Tuna: Skipjack (troll/pole)	Basa/Tra (farmed) Clams (wild) Cod: Pacific (trawled) Crab: Blue*, King (Alaska), Snow Crab: Imitation/Surimi Flounders, Soles (Pacific) Lobster: American/Maine Mahi mahi/Dolphinfish (US) Oysters (wild)* Scallops: Sea (Northeast and Canada) Shrimp (US farmed or wild) Squid Swordfish (US longline)* Tuna: Bigeye, Yellowfin (troll/pole) Tuna: canned light, canned white/Albacore*	Chilean Seabass/Toothfish* Cod: Atlantic Crab: King (imported) Flounders, Soles (Atlantic) Groupers* Halibut: Atlantic Lobster: Spiny (Caribbean imported) Mahi mahi/Dolphinfish (imported) Monkfish Orange Roughy* Rockfish (Pacific) Salmon (farmed, including Atlantic)* Scallops: Sea (Mid-Atlantic) Sharks* Shrimp (imported farmed or wild) Snapper: Red* Sturgeon*, Caviar (imported wild) Swordfish (imported)* Tuna: Albacore, Bigeye, Yellowfin (longline)* Tuna: Bluefin*	<p><b>Support Ocean-Friendly Seafood</b></p> <p><b>Best Choices</b> are abundant, well-managed and caught or farmed in environmentally friendly ways.</p> <p><b>Good Alternatives</b> are an option, but there are concerns with how they're caught or farmed—or with the health of their habitat due to other human impacts.</p> <p><b>Avoid</b> for now as these items are caught or farmed in ways that harm other marine life or the environment.</p> <p><b>Key</b>                      Northeast = Connecticut to Maine                      Mid-Atlantic = North Carolina to New York                      * Limit consumption due to concerns about mercury or other contaminants.                      † Visit <a href="http://www.oceansalive.org/eat.cfm">www.oceansalive.org/eat.cfm</a>                      ‡ Some or all of this fishery is certified as sustainable to the Marine Stewardship Council standard. Visit <a href="http://www.msc.org">www.msc.org</a></p> <p>Seafood may appear in more than one column</p>

Ask where it's from.

Ask if it's farmed or wild.

Ask how it's caught.

(2007 National Seafood Watch Pocket Guide, © Monterey Bay Aquarium Foundation)

## Sample "All Seafood" list (just a portion of this list is shown here)

Seafood WATCH 2007 All Seafood List		
BEST CHOICES	GOOD ALTERNATIVES	AVOID
Abalone (Farmed)	Basa/Tra (Farmed Imported)	Caviar (Wild-Caught)
Barramundi (U.S. Farmed)	Black Sea Bass	Chilean Seabass
Catfish (U.S. Farmed)	Bluefish	Cod, Atlantic
Caviar (Farmed)	Clams, Atlantic Surf (Wild-Caught)	Conch, Queen
Char, Arctic (Farmed)	Clams, Hard (Wild-Caught)	Crab, King (Russia)
Clams (Farmed)	Clams, Ocean Quahog (Wild-Caught)	Crayfish (Farmed Imported)
Clams, Softshell/Steamers (Wild-Caught)	Cod, Pacific (Trawl-Caught)	Dogfish (Worldwide (except B.C.))
Cod, Pacific (Alaska Longline)	Crab, Blue	Flounders/Soles (U.S. Atlantic Ocean)
Crab, Dungeness	Crab, Imitation	Grenadier (U.S. Pacific Ocean)

(2007 All Seafood List © Monterey Bay Aquarium Foundation)

## 2. Create a monitoring system

You might consider creating a list of all the seafood items you serve and chart where they are from and how they are caught. Ask your seafood purveyor for the shipment invoices to help you create this. Here's a sample, used by the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Portola Restaurant and Cafe. Post the list in a place where your staff can easily reference it and be sure to update them at regular staff meetings.

Each time a source changes for an item that you're selling, update the information on the chart, post it and let your staff know. This will allow your staff to respond quickly and professionally to customer inquiries about your seafood.

**Sample of Portola Cafe chart:**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Origin (Country/State/Region)</b>	<b>Farmed or Wild</b>	<b>Capture or Harvest Method</b>	<b>Distributor</b>
<b>Whole Calamari</b>	U.S Pacific coast - Monterey	Wild	Net	OF, MF
<b>21/25 Prawns</b>	CEATECH - Kauai, HI	Farmed	Farmed	CEATECH
<b>Ahi Tuna</b>	Australia - Hawaii - Vietnam - Costa Rica	Wild	Line caught	OF, MF
<b>American Lobster</b>	Maine	Wild	Trap	OF, MF
<b>Atlantic/Icelandic cod</b>	<b>NO LONGER SERVING</b>	***	***	***
<b>Bay Scallops</b>	Massachusetts	Wild	Net	OF, MF
<b>Bay Shrimp</b>	N. California - Oregon - Washington	Wild	Net/trap	OF, MF

The need for consistent, up-to-date information will send the message to your purveyor that you are serious about your commitment and that you expect the same level of commitment from them.

3. Check the documents.

Become familiar with the documentation provided in seafood shipments and review them regularly (we recommend at least once a month). As the source changes, request a new copy of the invoice for your records, so you can check the information yourself.

Some purveyors may be hesitant to share the information at first, but remember that you are in control. Make your standards clear. If they cannot comply, consider changing to a distributor who will provide such information. You can also remind them that a federal law is now in effect requiring that seafood sold in retail outlets be labeled as to whether it is farmed or wild-caught and its country of origin. For more information about seafood labeling visit [www.ams.usda.gov/cool/](http://www.ams.usda.gov/cool/).

**Sample Invoice 1**

Tim,  
 Per your request, here is a list of our exotic fish, and where we import them from. Each week will vary, depending on availability.  
 Mahi Mahi: Costa Rica  
 Swordfish: Australia  
 Ahi Tuna: Costa Rica  
 Ono: Hawaii  
 Groper: New Zealand  
 Thank you,

## Sample Invoice 2

PR	PR	PHILIPPINE AIRLINES/TRU	LOCAL DELIVERY OR TRANSFER BY DELIVERY ORDER ISSUED TO:
07927011880	9/04/03	0700/00	CENTRA FREIGHT SERVICES INC.
A.C.E. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS	T09-0302225-6	SOUTH SHORE	
FOR DELIVERY TO		ROUTE	
T AND P FLANNERY SEAFOOD INC.			
PIER 45 SHEET 3-2			
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133			
NO. OF PKGS.	DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLES, SPECIAL MARKS & EXCEPTIONS		WEIGHT
6	FRESH YELLOWFIN TUNA INC CHECK# 120969 ATTACHED TO DO & 3461		1,197 Lb

## Sample Invoice 3

SHIPMENT#	BOX#	GRADE	SPECIES	#PC	(KGS)	(LBS)	(PRICE)	TOTAL
5034C FIJI	08013		OPAH RACK	1	15.92	35.1	\$2.50	\$87.75
			OPAH RACK	1	15.60	34.4	\$2.50	\$86.00
			OPAH RACK	1	14.61	32.2	\$2.50	\$80.50
			OPAH RACK	1	15.10	33.3	\$2.50	\$83.25
	08014		OPAH RACK	1	20.50	45.2	\$2.50	\$113.00
			OPAH RACK	1	15.20	33.5	\$2.50	\$83.75
			OPAH RACK	1	15.10	33.3	\$2.50	\$83.25
			OPAH RACK	1	13.79	30.4	\$2.50	\$76.00
5036C FIJI	S3-15		WAHOO H & G	8	75.00	165.34	\$2.50	\$413.35
	S3-19		WAHOO H & G	7	81.50	179.67	\$2.50	\$449.18
	S3-22		WAHOO H & G	8	72.00	158.73	\$2.50	\$396.82
	S3-28		WAHOO H & G	7	75.00	165.34	\$2.50	\$413.35

### III. Find Alternatives

As you review your seafood purchases, you may find that there are some changes you need to make. In addition to removing red “Avoid” list seafood from your menu, here are a few ideas to help you in that transition:

- Increase your ocean-friendly choices by adding more items to your menu from the green and yellow lists.
- Substitute sustainable seafood in your recipes that use species on the red “Avoid” list. Our “Chart of Alternatives” recommends green and yellow list species with similar culinary characteristics. For example, using sablefish in recipes calling for Chilean seabass. Visit our page for Restaurants and Retailers at [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org) and click on, “Alternative Choices” for the complete list of alternatives.
- Create regular specials that feature sustainable seafood items.
- Join the Seafood Choices Alliance at [www.seafoodchoices.org](http://www.seafoodchoices.org) (it’s free!). Their publication “*Sourcing Seafood: A Professional’s Guide to Procuring Ocean-friendly Fish and Shellfish*”, is available online and in hard copy for a fee. This will help you find suppliers and retailers selling green and yellow listed species.

### IV. Label your Menu

Try to provide more detailed information on your menus or labels to help your customer’s select environmentally-responsible seafood choices and to minimize confusion about your

seafood sources. For example, Alaskan Halibut Fish and Chips, Citrus Marinated Seafood Salad with Georgia Shrimp, Grilled Wild Alaskan Salmon, etc.

## V. Educate your Staff

Your staff plays an important role in helping your customers understand and appreciate the tasty world of sustainable seafood. You can work with your staff to learn about the issues concerning some fisheries and fish farms. *Seafood Watch* has a number of tools to help you empower your staff so that they feel comfortable interacting with your customers. Here are a few ideas:

- Post your seafood sources so everyone knows where your seafood comes from.
- Provide new information at regular meetings.
- Visit [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org) for more information, including:
  - Downloadable fact sheets and seafood reports (click on “Browse All Seafood”)
  - Downloadable fish, fishing gear, and aquaculture fact cards for quick reference
  - Downloadable training presentation on seafood issues, solutions and your role in marine conservation
  - Order our training DVD

## VI. Stay Informed

Join an organization to help you stay informed about ongoing activities among the sustainable seafood community of restaurants and retailers:

- The **Seafood Choices Alliance** publishes a quarterly newsletter and hosts a subscriber database on their web site where your business can be listed as a supporter of sustainable seafood. [www.seafoodchoices.org](http://www.seafoodchoices.org) (again, this is a free membership!)
- The **Chef’s Collaborative** provides members with networking opportunities and information on purveyors of sustainable seafood and produce. Member restaurants can be listed on their web site and the handy consumer pocket guide. [www.chefscollaborative.org](http://www.chefscollaborative.org)

## VII. Share your Commitment with your Customers

Part of your role in the sustainable seafood movement is spreading the word to your customers so they can also shift their seafood purchasing to more sustainable sources. Here are some ideas to try out:

- Insert a *Seafood Watch* pocket guide in your company brochure, at the point of purchase, on each tabletop or within each guest check for customers to take with them.
- Seafood Watch can help you create custom materials and other signage to promote your commitment to environmentally responsible sources of seafood.
- Provide language on your menu or at your seafood counter to inform your customers that you serve only sustainable seafood. State: “*All of our seafood comes from sustainable sources and is harvested in a manner that does not harm the environment. We proudly follow the guidelines of the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program.*” You may even want to add, “Ask us for a Sustainable Seafood pocket guide to take home with you!”

## VIII. Implement your Sustainable Seafood Business Practices

There are many ways to begin the implementation of sustainable seafood business practices. Most important is ensuring that your staff is informed and aware of the policy and the important role they play in communicating it to your guests. This may require a special meeting or perhaps include a memo with their paychecks. We've included sample language below for you to use for your buying policy and letter to staff.

### *Thank You!*

Seafood Watch staff is available to help you with all of the steps outlined in this document. Please contact us at any time with your questions or comments (831) 647-6871. Visit our web page designed specifically for Restaurants and Retailers at [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org). You'll find additional information and materials to help you with many of the ideas discussed in this document.

### **Additional Resources:**

The *Seafood Solutions* brochure from the Chef's Collaborative outlines specific questions you can ask your seafood purveyor, along with cooking tips and alternatives to popular seafood items. [www.chefscollaborative.org](http://www.chefscollaborative.org)

The Alliance for Environmental Innovation's *Business Guide to Sustainable Seafood* provides in-depth information about all of the most popular seafood as well as information you need when you talk to distributors. This can be downloaded from their web site. [www.environmentaldefense.org/alliance/](http://www.environmentaldefense.org/alliance/)

**Ecofish** is a totally sustainable seafood distributor that works with restaurants and grocery stores around the country to provide fresh and sustainable seafood. They are an excellent source for sustainable seafood and seafood sourcing tips [www.ecofish.com](http://www.ecofish.com)

The **Marine Stewardship Council** (MSC) has developed an environmental standard for sustainable and well-managed fisheries. It uses a product label to reward environmentally responsible fishery management and practices. For more information go to [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org).

### **Sample Policy Statement:**

The mission of Monterey Bay Aquarium is to inspire conservation of the oceans. In doing so we are committed to preserving healthy oceans and ocean wildlife for future generations.

#### **Our Seafood Recommendations**

We believe that if managed correctly, it's possible for people to catch and eat fish in a sustainable way. But it's extremely difficult—sometimes impossible—to find all the information needed to determine which fisheries are well managed and which are in trouble.

We know that today many ocean fisheries aren't managed in a sustainable manner. Fishing pressures are growing faster than our understanding of the effect people are having on the health of wild fish populations and ocean ecosystems. Fish consumption is on the rise in the developed world, reaching levels well beyond our basic nutritional needs. Globally, human population is increasing rapidly, straining the ability of ocean resources to feed people in the developed and developing world.

We recognize that people view sea creatures with different sets of values. Some see them strictly as sources of food; others see them as wildlife, valuable in their own right. We respect those differences, and the personal choices people make. We recognize that fish is an essential food source for people in many parts of the world, and we believe it is possible to catch seafood in a way that balances human needs with the needs of ocean ecosystems. Fishing has been central to the cultural and economic life of Monterey Bay as long as people have lived here. We value the important tradition of fishing in global cultures, and the economic role fishing plays in communities around the world.

We do our best to choose seafood from sustainable sources. At the Monterey Bay Aquarium, we're trying to make wise decisions about seafood consumption based on the best available information. We will regularly seek out new scientific information, and we'll change our menu and our seafood buying practices whenever the data indicate that we should.

### **Sample Letter posted for Restaurant staff from Management:**

MEMO TO OUR SERVICE STAFF:

It is estimated that 76% of the world's commercially fished species have been fished to or beyond the point at which their populations can easily sustain themselves.

To do what we can to counteract this, our restaurant has made a commitment to create menus that offer seafood from *healthy* and abundant fish populations.

Working with the Monterey Bay Aquarium we have agreed to adopt the *Seafood Watch* guidelines for our menu creation. These guidelines are based on scientific research that identify more abundant populations, catch methods that result in low levels of unwanted catch and that are more environmentally friendly.

Sixty-seven percent of the seafood consumed in America is purchased in restaurants. With our five restaurants in very visible locations, serving guests from all over the world, we have a unique opportunity to embrace the Aquarium's mission statement and 'inspire conservation of the oceans.' We are very proud to be a part of the solution, rather than the problem of depleting the oceans resources, and we believe that each of you can share a large measure of that pride.

You will be passing our commitment along to our guests by including a *Seafood Watch* Pocket Guide in each guest check you bring to the table and giving more guides if requested. We expect that you will have questions about the menu changes and potential inquiries from our guests. We are posting a summary page of *what* has changed and *why* on the schedule board. Management is available to field any additional questions you may have. Thank you for supporting this change that we believe is important to the future of our business, as well as the future of the oceans.