

WHY WILD?

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Sustainable and Wild. Two words we often hear tossed about the industry. But how much do we really know about sustainability, what are we looking for when it comes to sourcing responsibly managed seafood. Can wild also be sustainable?

Michael Kohan, Technical Program Director, Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute explains how Alaska has been leading the way to address some of the concerns that the hospitality industry has been faced with. In order to satisfy both their own consciences and reassure their guests that the fish or seafood they have purchased is, in fact, both protected and encouraged to thrive in the open seas.

"In Alaska, the future of wild seafood stocks and the environment are more important than immediate opportunities for commercial harvest. Alaska's fisheries are managed for the sustainable supply of seafood produced in Alaska's waters, as mandated in the state's constitution.

Every aspect of the Alaska fisheries is strictly regulated, closely monitored, and rigidly enforced. Strict regulations and harvest policies set in place by the multiple management and policy agencies based on sound science ensure that seafood populations are managed for sustainability. Harvesters are dedicated to responsible catch methods and habitat protection initiatives to ensure they are not impacting the pristine Alaska environment.

Alaska has the largest Wild Alaska pollock, wild sockeye salmon and flatfish fishery in the world, and is considered a model for sustainable fisheries management practices. Alaska fisheries are independently certified as sustainable fisheries by both the Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management program and the Marine Stewardship Council".

So Wild can also be Sustainable.

In 1959, when Alaska became a state, and long before the word 'sustainable' became commonplace in the foodservice sector, Alaskans wrote sustainability into their constitution, calling for all fisheries to be managed in a sustainable way. Alaska is one of the world's few governments that can proudly declare this dedication. Where we all use the word 'sustainable' as a form



of validation that we are responsible in our purchasing, the word is simply a way of life for Alaskan fisheries. In short, to the Alaskan fishing families, there isn't any other way, other than to fish responsibly.

The responsible fishing management and sustainable practices undertaken by the fishing communities of Alaska mean that not only are the fish protected in terms of harvest quantities – care is also taken not to harm the fish, the environment, other marine animals and plant life.

Wild caught Alaska salmon, whitefish and shellfish mature at a natural, healthy pace. Allowed to swim freely in the clear and clean waters off the Alaskan 34,000 mile coastline, the superior flavor and texture of Alaska seafood is prized globally. The flavor and color characteristics are as a result of the species feeding on their natural diet of marine organisms, the texture as a result of annual migrations in the cold North Pacific.

The harvesting and processing of Alaska seafood plays an important role in the everyday lives of the Alaska fishing

communities. The seafood industry is the state's largest private sector employer. Each small salmon fishing vessel is a floating family business, contributing to state and local economies. Alaska's commercial catch accounts for over half the nation's commercial seafood harvest.

With a conscience clear that the fish on your menu is of the highest quality, sustainable, healthy and nutritious, how else can opting for Alaska seafood further benefit you?

The power of the Alaska seafood brand is proven to increase seafood sales. Diners repeatedly show that they are more likely to order a dish with the word "Alaska" or the Alaskan seafood logo on their menu. According to Datassential 2018, Alaska Seafood is the number 1 brand among proteins on U.S menus and Technomic 2018 suggests that 61% of consumers are more likely to order a fish or seafood dish if the Alaska seafood logo, or reference to it, is on the menu.

One of the most significant trends in the past few decades has been America's obsession with health and fitness. The lifestyles of

millions of Americans have been profoundly affected in their diet and exercise interests. This has been having an influence on the dining out culture, with Americans ordering more nutritious meals. The biggest beneficiary of the switch is seafood, according to a Gallup poll by the NRA.

With Alaskan fish and Alaska seafood allowed to thrive in crystal clear waters and mature at a natural pace, the nutritional advantages of the products speak for themselves. Full of Omega-3s, vitamins and minerals. Alaska seafood is a complete, high-quality protein source. Yet another reason to choose Alaska, and to let your diners know why. As Chef Rene Redzepi once said "Chefs have a new opportunity – and perhaps even an obligation – to inform the public about what is good to eat, and why."

Every great dish begins with carefully sourced ingredients. Whether you are a triple Michelin starred Maestro, or a brunch chef smoking your own salmon for Eggs Benedict, choosing wild and sustainable seafood from Alaska is the first step to a perfect plate. The rest is up to you.