

# Seafood Sourcing

The USDA's new dietary guidelines recommend the twice-weekly consumption of meals featuring seafood—not just any seafood, but those that are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, including: salmon (wild and farmed), shrimp, Pollock, cod, tuna (canned light) and catfish.

According to the United Nations, seafood is the fastest-growing sector of food production worldwide and is the most internationally traded food. The United States imports about 80% of its seafood, half of which (by value) is farmed. Sustainability—stewardship of the ocean resource—is very much a responsibility of foodservice operators, according

to the Seafood Choices Alliance, whose Seafood Summit took place last month in Seattle.

“Operators need to think about sustainability every time they order any product that is derived from the earth,” says an alliance spokesperson. For this month’s Soap Box, we asked readers:

- Do you serve sustainable seafood in your operation? Why or why not?
- If you do, how readily is product available?
- Are you aware of a demand among your clientele for sustainable seafood or other products?

Following are their responses.

**READER  
OPINION POLL**

Do you serve sustainable seafood in your operation? Why or why not? Do customers care?

Let us know what you think. We value your opinion.

E-mail your response/comments to: [jpond@fsdmag.com](mailto:jpond@fsdmag.com)



**ANN COOPER**  
FOODSERVICE DIRECTOR  
Berkeley (CA) Unified School District

“We don’t serve much seafood at all in the district. When I took over, the district wasn’t serving any seafood, and we have started to make that change. But we are not serving much yet; we’re just getting it on to cycle menus now.

“I don’t think most districts are serving it at this point. It is not one of the commodities, and if any fish is served, it will probably be fish sticks. It’s hard to find the right price, so we’re looking at our options and what is available to us. In a public school district with little money, we’re trying to get our arms around what we can serve, in the quantities that we need, that will be sustainable and that the kids will like.

“I think if you ask [parents or kids] district-wide [if they want sustainable seafood], they’d say yes. But no one comes up to me to say, ‘Gee, can we have wild Alaskan salmon on the menu?’. And quite frankly, I wouldn’t be able to afford it.”



**BEKIM PELLUMBI**  
CORPORATE EXECUTIVE CHEF  
Sterling Services, Canton, MI

“I do research through the Internet and talk to our vendors to find out what’s endangered. I no longer cook Chilean sea bass and my purveyor gives me a choice of farm-raised or not.

“We use a lot of salmon and I prefer Atlantic salmon because of its taste and texture; I don’t like the ‘additives’ in farm-raised that change its color. Sustainable seafood is available daily, but if the cost is too high, I’ll use something else.

“Unfortunately, I don’t see the interest in sustainable, organic or locally grown product coming from our customers. In the fall there are farmers markets and I’ll go on the weekends and buy whatever they have. During the rest of the year, I go to the market in downtown Detroit about three times each week and pick and choose my produce, but it’s not locally grown. You kind of get what you get here, unless you go out and get it yourself—and that’s what I’m doing.”



**FRANCISCO PUCK**  
DIRECTOR OF DINING SERVICES  
University of San Francisco (Bon Appetit)

“We have a partnership with the Monterey Bay Aquarium and we implement the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch. We follow their recommendations on what seafood we serve. There are three tiers—what we can serve, a middle ground [of good alternatives] and seafood you should definitely avoid.

“It’s not easy. We find that the local vendors are willing to work with us if we do it right, plan and order ahead of time. And there is definitely a cost factor.

“Students are aware of the issue and our client embraces our philosophy. We find ourselves being the trendsetters in terms of this.

“We recently participated in the [Bon Appetit] Eat Local Challenge and we did well for a small café. It was very rewarding, and we educated a lot of our students who didn’t realize that food can travel 2,000 just to get here.”



**JOANNA RICHARDSON JONES, RD**  
DIRECTOR, NUTRITIONAL SVCS  
St. Helena (CA) Hospital

“As a Seventh Day Adventist facility, we serve vegetarian meals in the cafeteria but meat and fish are choices on the patient menu.

“Our [menu] database limits what we can serve to patients. We go with recipes that are included in the database and we can’t change them. The nutrient content would be different if we substituted a different fish. It’s also important with respect to allergies because the database also handles those. A substitution might cause a problem, so we don’t have the luxury to pay attention to sustainability.

“We also tend to order what costs the least. We have to purchase all our food for patients from approved vendors, so we can only buy local produce for consumption in the cafeteria. I’m looking forward to seeing our vendors purchase sustainable items and pass it on to us. If there’s a great demand and volume ordered, they may do it.”



**NICHOLAS CAMODY**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, COO  
Parkhurst Dining Services, Pittsburgh

“We try to do what we can for the environment. Our tuna is dolphin-free. If something is endangered and someone asks us for it, we try to talk them out of it. Sustainable seafood is not readily available in this market in Pennsylvania and Ohio, but you can get anything shipped in. However, the cost might be four or times higher for wild-caught salmon, for example, but we might use it for catering.

“We are hugely pushing locally grown produce, meat and dairy. Almost 25% of our purchases are local, farm-sourced products, and that’s our annualized percentage. In season, May through November, we’re buying even more locally grown, that is, grown within a 50- to 75-mile radius from the account.

“We post that information in our operations and we’re finding customers are incredibly receptive. We’ve seen that our satisfaction scores have gone up and buying locally is part of that.”