

MAKING SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD CHOICES

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Photo: Love + Craft Kitchen

Looking at the food trends for 2020, dialing in to the health-factor and quality of the ingredients we are eating is at the forefront of many consumers' minds. Along with increasing the number of plants on our plates, we are firmly embracing the practice of making sustainable seafood choices. Fish and seafood are low calorie, vitamin-packed protein sources that uniquely provide those essential Omega-3 DHA and EPA fatty acids we've all heard about for supporting cardiovascular health.

WHAT is meant by the term sustainable seafood?

The ways in which seafood is caught or farmed greatly affects the quality of the end product, health of the ocean ecosystem, seafood population and our larger world. Sustainable seafood is that which is wild caught or farmed in ways that have the least environmental and social impacts.

According to the [Ocean Society](#), "When done correctly, sustainable seafood sourcing prevents overfishing, minimizes incidental impacts to other ocean wildlife and habitats, identifies and protects essential fish habitats, and takes into account the social and economic impacts on the communities from which the seafood is sourced."

WHY is it important?

Having an awareness and understanding of sustainable seafood choices is not only important for consumers, but also for restaurants, retail merchants, food suppliers and food producers.

Making sustainable seafood choices allows us all to continue to enjoy and provide high quality, healthy fish and seafood free of chemicals and additives. It also works to keep the ocean ecosystem in balance while supporting local economies.

HOW do I choose sustainable seafood products?

With increased interest, education and involvement on many levels, purchasing power is a primary driver of this trend. Whether a consumer shopping or dining out, or a restaurateur or food producer dealing with suppliers, get as much information as possible to make smart sustainable choices.

1. Ask questions such as:

- Do you provide sustainable seafood?
- Where is this seafood from?
- Is it wild caught or farmed?
- Does this supplier have any seafood certifications?

Asking questions voices your feelings of importance of the issue. If you are unable to get answers to your questions, it may be that the products are not sustainably sourced. In some cases, the person with whom you are speaking may require further training to better understand

the products. Either way, asking questions may prod that business further down the sustainable seafood path in order to meet customer demands and desires.

2. Consult a guide or app provided by one of the sustainable seafood organizations.

- The [Seafood Watch](#) program operated by the Monterey Bay Aquarium provides a helpful guide and app for consumers, as well as information and opportunities for involvement for businesses and organizations.
- [Ocean Wise Sustainable Seafood Program](#) provides information on fishing and farming techniques, sustainable seafood guides, and opportunities for involvement including partnerships with restaurants, retailers and suppliers.
- [Audubon G.U.L.F.](#) focuses on fishery improvement projects and partnerships with restaurants in the Gulf of Mexico area. Their app provides information for consumers about sustainable seafood, including a list of restaurants serving such in the area.
- [Seafood Substitutions](#) from National Geographic provides a list of alternate choices for popular seafood that has been overfished.

Keep in mind that these organizations sometimes present varied information based on their mission and designated audience.

3. Be open to alternative options

Instead of relying on the usual salmon, shrimp and tuna, how about mixing in Pacific Cod, mussels, scallops, oysters, Rockfish or Arctic Char? There are many delicious choices available. You may be pleasantly surprised by a new find!

4. Look for certification labels

Not all retailers or suppliers will use the same labels to designate sustainable seafood, and the level of sustainability may vary, but here are a few common examples:



For more information on eco-certification, check out the information [Seafood Watch](#) provides.

5. Consider becoming involved

- Consumers can subscribe to newsletters to learn more and stay up to date, or donate to organizations if so inclined.
- Restaurants, suppliers and retailers can join partnership programs which can support their efforts.

And, finally, see it all pulled together in this video from the [Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch - Make Better Seafood Choices](#).