



What's Cooking

A quarterly publication of the South Carolina Aquarium's Sustainable Seafood Initiative

Spring 2008

General News

Welcome!

Welcome to the newest SSI partners: The American Grocery Restaurant (Greenville), Virginia's on King, Saffire at the Marriott Charleston, The Atlantic Room, Shrimper's Restaurant, Osprey Point Clubhouse, Jasmine Porch, Turtle Point Bar & Grill, and The Ocean Room.

Congratulations to our new Gold Partner!

Congratulations to CQ's and Chef Eric Sayers! The Winter 2008 menu was awarded Gold Status in March. CQ's will be listed as a Gold Partner on the new SSI rack cards printed this spring. Chefs interested in participating in this program should contact Megan Westmeyer at (843)579-8502 or mwestmeyer@scaquarium.org.

2008 James Beard Foundation Awards

Congratulations to three SSI partner chefs who have been nominated for the 2008 James Beard Foundation Awards! Chef Sean Brock of McCrady's was nominated for Rising Chef of the Year. Chef Mike Lata of FIG and Chef Robert Stehling of Hominy Grill were both nominated for Best Chef in the Southeast. Deemed "the Oscars of the food world," by Time magazine, The James Beard Foundation Awards are the country's most coveted honor for chefs; food and beverage professionals; broadcast media, journalists, and authors working on food; and restaurant architects and designers.

Upcoming Events

- ☞ Monday, April 14— Sustainable Seafood and Wine Dinner at Cru Café
- ☞ Tuesday, May 13 – Sustainable Seafood and Wine Dinner at Red Drum Gastropub
- ☞ SAVE THE DATE!! 2008 SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD FESTIVAL - **SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26**

Our goal is to promote the conservation of fishery resources and the use of sustainable, especially local and domestic, seafood in restaurants.



Yellowfin tuna are found throughout the world in warm waters. As the water temperature off the east coast increases this spring, yellowfin tuna will migrate northward. The peak harvest season off South Carolina occurs in May, off North Carolina in June, then in the northeast through the summer. Yellowfin tuna are also available from the Gulf of Mexico throughout the year, with harvest peaking in the summer.

Need Help with World Oceans Day Event

The Aquarium and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy will host a series of events on June 7 for World Oceans Day, focusing on the effect of global climate change on the oceans, specifically on seafood supplies. We would like to follow the evening panel discussion with sustainable seafood cooking demonstrations and samplings. Please contact Megan Westmeyer at (843)579-8502 or mwestmeyer@scaquarium.org if you would like to volunteer.

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Signature Seafood, Spring 2008: Soft Shell Crab and Yellowfin Tuna

This spring the Sustainable Seafood Initiative is featuring two local and sustainable seafood products: soft shell blue crab and yellowfin tuna. As many of you will remember, we featured blue crab in the Summer of 2007 newsletter and distributed a fact sheet about blue crab sustainability at that time. You will find a fact sheet about yellowfin tuna sustainability with this newsletter.

Soft Shell Crab

Blue crabs must shed their hard shell in order to grow and females must be in the soft shell condition to mate. Mating generally occurs from February to



November with peaks from March through July and in October and November. "Peeling" or molting, when the crabs shed their shells, is triggered by water temperature.

There is usually a large run of peeler crabs in South Carolina in April.

Fishermen targeting peeler crabs will often deploy crab traps "baited" with live male crabs. These males release pheromones that attract females that are nearly ready to molt and mate. The females are then held in a shedding tank on land until they molt. After molting, the soft shell crabs are taken out of the water and refrigerated for sale. Because crabs can molt year-round, peeling houses can provide soft shell crabs to the local market during off-peak times of the year.

Yellowfin Tuna

May is a great time of year to ask your purveyor for South Carolina-caught yellowfin tuna. This tuna is from a sustainable and well-managed fishery, though fishing pressure is high. The population harvested in the U.S.

extends throughout the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, is vulnerable to fishing pressure by many other



countries, and is jointly managed through the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. Not all member countries enforce the internationally agreed upon minimum size limit, thus harvest of undersized (juvenile) tuna does still occur, primarily in equatorial waters.

The U.S. has implemented and enforces a more restrictive minimum size limit as well as many other strict fishery management regulations. The primary gear used to harvest yellowfin is the pelagic longline. Pelagic longlines have little impact on the surrounding habitat but do have bycatch of other fish species, including juvenile tuna, sea turtles, birds and marine mammals. The U.S. has implemented strict gear regulations to minimize this bycatch and has the "cleanest" longline fishery in the world. Some yellowfin tuna are caught with troll lines or greenstick gear. Both of these gear types use a small number of hooks and fish are immediately removed from the hook, decreasing the amount of dead bycatch.

Partner Activities

In late January Chef Nico Romo and snapper/grouper fisherman Mark Marhefka teamed up to host a fantastic sustainable seafood dinner at



Fish Restaurant. Nico crafted a four course meal featuring fish caught by Marhefka, who timed his fishing trip to end the day before the dinner. Forty guests packed the second floor dining room at Fish, enjoyed a wonderful meal and fine wine, and had a generous portion of education as well. Sustainable Seafood Initiative coordinator Megan Westmeyer spoke about the sustainability of each seafood product and Marhefka described life as a commercial fisherman and the fish featured during the dinner.

The Restaurant at Middleton Place hosted February's sustainable seafood dinner, featuring local farm-raised striped bass from Swimming Rock Fish Farm. Guest speakers included SSI's Westmeyer, as well as Kevin Hutchinson, owner and operator of Swimming Rock. Middleton Place put a special spin on the event by pairing each course with a sustainable wine from Bonterra Vineyards, a sponsor of the 2007 Sustainable Seafood Festival.



The Distinctively Charleston Food and Wine Festival was very special for the Sustainable Seafood Initiative this year. The SSI received a Culinary Legend Award during the opening ceremonies of the Festival. The program honors those who have made an impact in the culinary community of Charleston and have contributed significantly to Lowcountry cuisine.

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The SSI was also one of just a handful of local organizations featured in the P'On Community Cares Tasting Tent. Chefs from Middleton Place, 39 Rue de Jean, and Coast paired up with the Sustainable Seafood Initiative and handed samples of their featured dish to help us raise awareness of sustainable seafood.

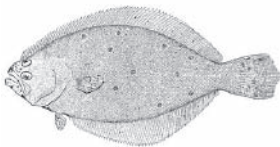
In the News

Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab

Dire predictions for the Chesapeake Bay blue crab have been making headlines in the mid-Atlantic region. The most recent bay-wide survey indicates that the population is at a low level of abundance and reproduction is low, therefore the harvest of blue crabs for the next year will also be set at low levels. Fortunately, the population is still above the level at which it would be declared overfished. A decline in the population abundance occurred from 1983 to 2001 then abundance stabilized at low levels, where it has remained since. Bay-wide harvest is far below historical averages and may set new historical lows in 2008. This decline has been linked to both heavy fishing pressure and loss of habitat due to degraded water quality. Underwater bay grasses are important habitat for juvenile blue crabs, but runoff from land contains excess nutrients and sediments. The nutrients cause excess growth of algae that blocks sunlight from reaching the underwater bay grasses, as does the sediment.

Mid-Atlantic Summer Flounder

Though summer flounder fishing mortality rates have declined substantially from the mid-1990s, when summer flounder was heavily overfished, the population and the fishery are not yet where they need to be. The 2007 stock assessment found that the level of fishing mortality is still too high for the current size of the stock. The population abundance has also increased since lows in the mid-1990s but is still just below the size at which the population is considered overfished. When the stock is fully recovered (according to federal law, rebuilding must be complete by 2013), the population



size is expected to be double the current size and will be able to supply many more fish to commercial and recreational fishermen. The population is currently larger than it has been in the past 25 years, but scientists believe the virgin stock size (the size of the population before it was fished) was even larger than it is now.

Misrepresentation of Food Products

Earlier this year, legislation pertaining to the misrepresentation of food products (H. 3028) passed through the South Carolina House of Representatives. This legislation is now before the South Carolina Senate and is scheduled to be discussed in a Judiciary Committee in the near future. The Judiciary Committee is chaired by Senator McConnell (Charleston) and includes Senators Anderson (Greenville), Campsen (Charleston), Ceips (Beaufort), Cleary (Horry), Elliott (Horry), Ford (Charleston), Rankin (Horry), Ritchie (Greenville) and Vaughn (Greenville). Chefs in any of these areas should contact the Senators to encourage support for this legislation. Contact information can be found at www.scstatehouse.net. The full Judiciary Committee can be e-mailed at sju@scsenate.org; include the word "constituent" in your e-mail subject line to attract the senators' attention.

SSI's Westmeyer Named to Chefs Collaborative Board

Sustainable Seafood Initiative Coordinator Megan Westmeyer has joined the Board of Overseers of Chefs Collaborative, a national network of chefs and food professionals promoting sustainable food. Westmeyer was asked to join the Board because of her work with the Sustainable Seafood Initiative and knowledge of sustainable fisheries. The mission of the Chefs Collaborative is to work with chefs and the greater food community to celebrate local foods and foster a more sustainable food supply. The Collaborative inspires action by translating information about our food into tools for making knowledgeable purchasing decisions. Through these actions, Collaborative members embrace seasonality, preserve diversity and traditional practices, and support local economies. For more information, see www.chefscollaborative.org.

Fishery Management Updates

The Red Snapper Blues

According to a recent red snapper stock assessment, the South Atlantic population is extremely overfished and experiencing severe overfishing. The spawning population is only 3-6% of the size that would produce maximum sustainable yield. Steep declines in the South Atlantic red snapper population occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, stabilizing at a very low level in the 1980s. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has two years to end overfishing and implement a rebuilding plan. Because of the severity of the depletion, the red snapper population will most likely not be rebuilt until 2040. Gulf of Mexico red snapper is also severely overfished and is still experiencing overfishing, but the population is now being more effectively regulated and should begin to recover, though the population will not be fully rebuilt until 2032. Expect red snapper to remain scarce and expensive.



Klamath River Salmon

The Klamath River, in California and Oregon, was once one of the most productive salmon rivers on the west coast. The 2006 salmon fishing season was completely closed in many areas due to such low returns of chinook to the Klamath. The 2007 season was open, but the fish didn't bite. The outlook for the 2008 season is bleak.

One of the biggest problems for salmon in the Klamath River are dams in the upper Klamath erected to divert water for irrigation. After two years of negotiations, Klamath Basin tribes, environmental groups, fishermen and farmers have produced an agreement that would ensure water for farmers' crops and enough river flow to keep fish stocks healthy. The plan includes removing four dams in the Klamath River within the next year. The only hitch is that the owner of the dams, PacifiCorp, has not yet signed onto the agreement, but negotiators are confident that PacifiCorp will agree to the proposed plan. If not, PacifiCorp may be required to retrofit the dams to allow salmon to bypass the structures, an extremely costly procedure.

SSI Partners

Charleston Restaurants

39 Rue De Jean
A.W. Shuck's
The Atlantic Room*
Blossom
The Boathouse Restaurants
Bocci's
Carolina's
Carolina Catering
Charleston Crab House
Circa 1886
Coast
Cru Café & Catering
Cypress Lowcountry Grille
Daniel Island Club
Duvall Catering & Event Design
Embassy Suites Hotel, Airport-Convention Center
EVO Pizzeria
The Fat Hen

FIG
FISH
Fleet Landing
Hank's Seafood Restaurant
High Cotton
Hominy Grill
Hyman's Seafood
Il Cortile del Re
Island Chef - A Complete Personal Chef Service
Jasmine Porch*
Magnolias
McCrary's
Middleton Place Restaurant
The Ocean Room*
Old Firehouse Restaurant
Old Village Post House
Osprey Point Clubhouse*
Peninsula Grill
Pogon's Porch

Red Drum Gastropub
The River Course
Saffire at the Marriott*
Sea Island Grill
Shrimper's Restaurant*
Slightly North of Broad
Tides at the Beach Club
Tommy Condon's
Triangle Char and Bar
Tristan
Turtle Point Bar & Grill*
Virginia's on King*
Voysey's at Cassique
Woodlands Resort and Inn

Beaufort and Hilton Head Restaurants

Alligator Grille Seafood Restaurant and Sushi Bar
CQ's Restaurant
Panini's Café

Grand Strand Restaurants

Divine Fish House
Umi Pacific Grille

Greenville Restaurants

American Grocery Restaurant*

Retail and Community Partners

Aramark Special Events Catering at the College of Charleston
Charleston Cooks!
Cindy's Seafood & Country Market
Earth Fare
Slow Food Charleston
Swimming Rock Fish Hatchery

*New Partner

What's Cooking is a quarterly publication from the Sustainable Seafood Initiative at the South Carolina Aquarium. Please contact Megan Westmeyer at (843) 579-8502 or mwestmeyer@scaquarium.org with any questions or to be removed from this distribution list.