



What's Cooking

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

Summer 2007

General News

New: SSI Partner Fee

In July all SSI partners will receive an invoice for the new annual SSI partnership fee of \$25. The fee will cover the cost of the educational binders given to all partners and costs associated with this newsletter. In addition the fee will annually reaffirm the partners' desire to be involved with the SSI. Please contact Megan at (843)579-8502 with questions.

New Opportunity for Partners

All SSI restaurant partners are now eligible to apply for Platinum or Gold Partnership. To become a Platinum or Gold Partner, the seafood on your menu will be assessed for sustainability. Platinum and Gold Partners will be recognized as such on all promotional materials and will be eligible for special promotions and enhanced media opportunities. Contact Megan Westmeyer at (843)579-8502 for more information.



Blue crab accounts for 10% of the value of South Carolina's commercial seafood harvest. Still, South Carolina's blue crab harvest pales in comparison to that of Louisiana, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. Crab processing operations in the U.S. are concentrated in Alabama and the Chesapeake Bay region. If you can't source local crab meat, ask for domestically harvested crab!

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

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Welcome!

Welcome to the newest SSI partner: Umi Pacific Grille in Myrtle Beach

Event Opportunities

Mark your calendar for Sunday, October 21st, the 4th-annual Sustainable Seafood Festival at the Charleston Maritime Center. We need your help to make this our most successful event ever! Call Jennifer at (843) 579-8655 to commit to a cooking competition (where attendees sample a "flight" of seafood and rate each restaurant's preparation) or a cooking demo. I'll be calling each of you asking for your involvement, so please check your schedules and think about the type of commitment you can make. (Note: We cover the cost of seafood for the chefs in the competition.)

We are also looking for SSI partner chefs to lead cooking demos. Specifically, we need volunteers to prepare and serve samples of the quarterly signature seafood, blue crab, to Aquarium guests one Saturday from noon – 1:30 p.m. In addition, we'd like to promote SSI and Edible Lowcountry with a blue crab demo at Whole Foods. Call Jennifer at (843) 579-8655 for more details.

Upcoming Events

- Wednesday, July 11 – Chef Craig Diehl of Cypress leads cooking demo at Whole Foods featuring local swordfish.
- Wednesday, July 25 – Chef Fred Neville hosts Sustainable Seafood Dinner at Fat Hen on Johns Island. Two guest chefs will also prepare courses.
- Wednesday, August 29 – Chef Jeremiah Bacon hosts sustainable seafood dinner as part of Carolina's beer dinner series. Courses will be paired with beers from Palmetto Brewing.
- Saturday, September 29 – Chef Brandon Buck hosts sustainable seafood dinner at Middleton Place.

Signature Seafood, Summer 2007: Blue Crab



Blue crabs, a summer favorite of many Lowcountry residents, are on the upswing with respect to sustainability. The South Carolina blue crab population remains below average size but is within normal fluctuations. Environmental factors, such as the long drought of 2001-2002, are partially responsible for below average crab harvests, as are the reduced price per pound paid for crabs in the fall. Poor water quality and loss of salt marsh habitat also strain blue crab populations. Fortunately, blue crabs are naturally resilient and quickly reproduce and rebuild populations. In fact, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources 2005 fall crab potting survey yielded the largest number of mature female crabs since its inception in 1988.

Very few chefs and restaurants are fortunate enough to be able to serve local blue crab meat because of price and availability. If you are not one of those lucky few, but still want to serve sustainable crab, source your product from another major domestic crab producing area such the Gulf of Mexico or Chesapeake Bay. Avoid sourcing crab from countries such as Venezuela and Thailand that harvest and farm crab in unsustainable ways.

In the News

Skate's Rise in Popularity - Depletion of Population

Historically harvested only for bait in lobster traps, northeastern skate has skyrocketed in popularity. The fishery for human consumption, known as the skate wing fishery, is the result of incidental catch (non-targeted species) in groundfish, monkfish, and scallop trawl fisheries. This fishery evolved in 1990s when skate was an underutilized population which could be used to supplement incomes as other fisheries were depleted.



Increases in prices paid to the wing fishery have increased since 2002 have led more vessels to target skate. As a result, winter skate, the species primarily used for human consumption has been declared overfished (depleted). Thorny skate also continues to be overfished but is rebuilding. No other skate populations are overfished or undergoing overfishing.

Reductions in harvest of winter skate will be necessary to rebuild the population. The New England Fishery Management Council must establish catch limits, and may need to reduce effort and bycatch; they may also consider closed areas or daily or trip retention limits. Fortunately, research is being conducted on bycatch reduction methods, such as twine tops in trawls and dredges to allow skate escape.

While winter skate is not at maximum sustainability, it is not a bad choice for SSI partner chefs. The scientific monitoring and management process has quickly responded to the issue and should be able to curtail the harvest and rebuild the population in a timely manner.

Snapper and Grouper Updates

A recent stock assessment of South Atlantic gag grouper, the most commonly harvested grouper in our area, revealed the stock to be undergoing overfishing.

Substantial reductions in harvest will be necessary.



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An updated South Atlantic vermilion snapper stock assessment, the most commonly harvested snapper in our area (also known as b-liner), also found



the stock to be undergoing overfishing. A 61% reduction in harvest (as opposed the 31%

reduction that was thought to be needed last year) will be necessary. On the bright side, Gulf of Mexico vermilion snapper revealed it is no longer overfished or undergoing overfishing.

In addition, a recent stock assessment for Gulf of Mexico red grouper indicated that the population is not overfished and is no longer undergoing overfishing. As a result, the total allowable catch may be increase.



Gulf of Mexico red snapper management has gone through some dramatic changes in management in the last six months. Instead of an open 10-day fishing season at the beginning of each month until the annual quota is harvested (causing a race for fish), individual fishermen or boats are now allocated yearly quotas that they may harvest at any time. This should create a more consistent supply.

Unfortunately, Gulf of Mexico red snapper continues to be overfished and is subject to overfishing. After many years of overharvest, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has

finally taken action by decreasing the annual total allowable catch, which will tighten the supply of domestic red snapper. Further regulations currently under consideration may decrease the annual total allowable catch even more in 2008. Gulf of Mexico vermilion snapper, or b-liner, is a much more sustainable option.

Sustainable Chilean Sea Bass?

Yes, it is true. There is a population of sustainably harvested Chilean sea bass, certified by the Marine Stewardship Council, but this doesn't mean that all Chilean sea bass are sustainable. **Sustainable Seafood Initiative partners should still refrain from serving Chilean sea bass.**

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an

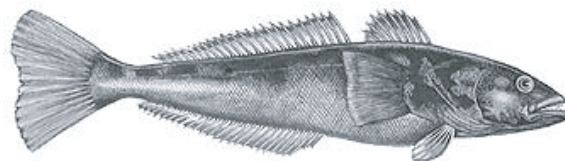
international organization that certifies fisheries as sustainable and well managed. They are very well respected and have high standards. A few years ago, a relatively small Chilean sea bass fishery in the South Georgian and South Sandwich (SGSS) Islands underwent certification. (These islands are in the Southern Atlantic Ocean and are a territory of the United Kingdom.) The team of scientists who conducted the assessment had a couple of very important findings:

- 1) This fishery is well managed.
- 2) Enforcement of fishery regulations is very strict and illegal fishing is not common.
- 3) This subpopulation of Chilean sea bass is geographically and reproductively separate from all other Chilean sea bass and is found only within the territorial waters of the SGSS Islands.

This final finding was the most important. Because these fish do not migrate into other areas they are not subject to fishing pressure by other countries. Because the fish do not breed with any other Chilean sea bass subpopulations, they are not affected by depletion elsewhere. Thus, the SGSS Islands Chilean sea bass fishery was certified as sustainable. The Chilean sea bass sold by Whole Foods is from this certified fishery.

To market SGSS Islands Chilean sea bass as a MSC certified product (the only sustainable Chilean sea bass) the seller must go through a Chain of Custody certification process

(http://www.msc.org/html/content_1167.htm). Recently a large seafood importer from Rhode Island received a chain of custody certification, so we may see the certified product available in our market. Please contact Megan at (843)579-8502 if you find a source of MSC certified Chilean sea bass.



Status of U.S. Fisheries, 2006

On June 22 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released its annual report on the status of U.S. fisheries. According to Bill Hogarth, NOAA Assistant Administer for Fisheries, “The results from 2006 are mixed – some stocks have improved while others have declined.” New federal regulations require that overfishing halt within two years. The following are the changes in 2006:

- ☞ Northeast sea scallops – no longer subject to overfishing (excessive rate of harvest)
- ☞ Gulf of Mexico vermilion snapper – no longer overfished (depleted); subject to overfishing
- ☞ Large coastal sharks – status is now unknown due to a lack of adequate data in the new stock assessment
- ☞ Northeast winter skate – overfishing
- ☞ Gulf of Mexico gag grouper – undergoing overfishing
- ☞ Northwest petrale sole – undergoing overfishing

- ☞ Eastern Pacific yellowfin tuna – undergoing overfishing
- ☞ Gulf of Mexico gray triggerfish – undergoing overfishing
- ☞ Monkfish – overfished
- ☞ South Atlantic pink shrimp – depleted due to environmental conditions
- ☞ South Atlantic tilefish – 80% rebuilt

SSI Partners

Charleston Restaurants

39 Rue De Jean
Al Di La
A.W. Shuck's
Blossom
The Boathouse Restaurants
Bocci's
Boulevard Diner
Carolina's
Carolina Catering
Charleston Crab House
Charleston Grill
Circa 1886
Coast
Cru Café & Catering
Cypress Lowcountry Grille
Daniel Island Club
Embassy Suites Hotel,
Airport-Convention Center
EVO Pizzeria
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
J. Bistro
Jestine's Kitchen
Locklear's Beach City Grill
Locklear's Lowcountry Grill
Magnolias
McCrary's
Middleton Place Restaurant
Mustard Seed
Old Firehouse Restaurant
Old Village Post House
Peninsula Grill
Poogan's Porch
Red Drum Gastropub
The River Course

Sea Island Grill
Sette Italian Restaurant
Sienna
Slightly North of Broad
Stephen Duvall Catering &
Events
Tides at the Beach Club
Tommy Condon's
Triangle Char and Bar
Tristan
Voysey's at Cassique
Woodlands Resort and Inn

Beaufort and Hilton Head Restaurants

Alligator Grille Seafood
Restaurant and Sushi Bar
Antonio's Restaurant
Blake's
Boathouse II Restaurant
Breakwater Restaurant and
Bar
Celebration Events

CQ's Restaurant
Ocean Grill
Old Fort Pub Restaurant
Panini's Café
The Saltus River Grill
Sigler's Rotisserie and
Seafood

Grand Strand Restaurants

The Fish Camp Bar
Louis's at Pawley's
Umi Pacific Grille*

Retail and Community Partners

Charleston Cooks!
Cindy's Seafood & Country
Market
Earth Fare
Slow Food Charleston

*New Partner

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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.