

Undercover Seafood Shopper Part 2 - Summer Quinn



Mystery Shopper?

It has become a personal challenge for me to get seafood “unenthusiasts” to willingly eat the stuff. They may not know at first that seafood is what they are eating, but what they don’t know can’t make their noses wrinkle. I was attending a dinner party not long ago and invited a friend who swore she would have nothing to do with fish. Mahi mahi was on the menu, and at long last I coaxed her into trying a piece. My friend slowly raised the fork to

her lips, cautiously placed the meat on her tongue and began to chew, she repeated the motion, and before you knew it her fork was again prodding the plate. Low and behold, she was enjoying the meal! Victory was mine!

Mental conditioning is not that hard to overcome with a good sales pitch. With the proper wording anyone can make anything sound appealing. The point of my story is... if half of the sales people at seafood counters were as convincing as I, seafood sales would be constantly on the rise. Unfortunately the sales people I have encountered recently frequently seem to be misinformed and unable to convey the joys of eating fish. Hopefully the following conversations will provide some insight as to what I mean...

Question one at store C: “What makes Copper River salmon different from the other salmon?”

The reply: “They have more fat because they struggle more in the water. Well, you know there are all of these rivers that come together at one point and it’s really cold. I mean, it’s excellent fish, but it’s a lot of hype, and it’s really expensive.” Good sales pitch.

Time for a reply: “I always wondered what was special about it because everyone is so eager to get it first.”

“Yea, yea. I know... like I said it’s just a lot of hype.”

Enough salmon talk: “Why do you have tuna wrapped in plastic?”

“Oh! If it wasn’t in plastic it oxidizes right away and gets this awful color and it just goes really fast, and also we don’t want it to touch anything else.” Well, the logic here is not too far off, but I don’t think this person has ever heard the expression quit while you are ahead.

Experience at store D: I had begun to think the seafood counter here was just an accessory, something to look at with no practical application, after staring behind the unmanned counter for at least 10 minutes. Suddenly a young man appeared. “Can I help you.” He offered. “No thanks just looking.” I looked on... “What are those holes?” I said tapping my finger on the glass at a salmon fillet with gaping.

“I don’t know”, he said turning his body sideways from me and putting his head down. Without the slightest hint of confidence he gave it another shot... “Well...I heard somewhere...a long time ago... that it may have to do with not icing the fish properly. I don’t know though because it was a long time ago.” He was a nice guy, and I felt bad knowing and not telling him that if he delivered his answer with a little more confidence he would have led me to believe he knew what he was talking about.

Today’s lesson for the people behind seafood counters is seek training, then deliver your answers with confidence, and don’t elaborate just to keep talking. Stay tuned until the next issue, who knows what creativity may be awaiting us!

The New Bioterrorism Act UPDATE - Allison Corcoran

Are you ready?

Do you know what the new Bioterrorism Act requires you to do and when the requirements start?

On June 12, 2002 the “Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002”, better known as the Bioterrorism Act, was signed into law. The law will be implemented on December 12th of this year. Title III of the requires the FDA to implement specific measures to ensure the safety of the nation’s food supply. The four major provision of Title III are:

- Registration
- Prior Notice for Imports
- Administrative Detention
- Record Keeping



The FDA is expecting to publish the final rule for the first two items – Registration and Prior Notice – on October 10th. At this time they plan on having their systems in place so that companies can begin complying. Companies will have until December 12th to register and to start following the new import requirements. After this time, failure to be registered will be a prohibited act, and could result in prosecution. Foreign companies that do not register and attempt to import will have the food held at the port of entry.

Domestic and foreign facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for human or animal consumption in the United States are required to register. Exempt are: farms; retail food operations; restaurants; fishing vessels not engaged in processing [as defined in 21 CFR 123.3 (k)]; and facilities regulated exclusively (throughout the entire facility) by the USDA.

The Country of Origin Labeling Act - Allison Corcoran

Country of Origin Labeling (COL) may be voluntary for another year, but it’s something that prudent businesses are thinking about already.

In 2002 Congress passed the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act. This act amended the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to require retailers to inform consumers of the country of origin for covered products initially under a voluntary program, which becomes mandatory on September 30, 2004. The voluntary guidelines were issued in October of last year, with the Proposed Final Rule with the mandatory guidelines due out this fall. All covered product that is on retail shelves as of September 30, 2004 must meet the labeling requirements.

What are the labeling requirements and what products do they apply to?

The law applies to both U.S and imported product. Wild fish and shellfish and farm-raised fish and shellfish are covered under the legislation. The law does exclude any item that is an “ingredient in a processed food item”. However, it does not specifically define a “processed food item”. Under the voluntary guidelines, the USDA has chosen two definitions: 1) a combination of ingredients that result in a product with a different identity than that of the covered product; and 2) a product that is “materially changed” to an extent that its character is substantially different from the covered commodity. Or, to put it more simply, all fresh and frozen fish and shellfish items are covered. All cooked and canned fish

products, including canned tuna and canned sardines, and “restructured” fish products, such as surimi and fish sticks, are excluded.

To convey the COL information, retailers may use a placard, stamp, label, mark or any other clear and visible sign on the product, the packaging, display counter, etc.

- *United States country of origin*

For a product to be eligible for a “United States Country of Origin”, wild fish & shellfish products must be derived entirely from product either harvested in U.S. waters or by a US flagged vessel and processed in the US or aboard a US flagged vessel. Farmed fish must come from fish hatched, harvested and processed in the US.

- *Wild v. Farmed*

The law requires all fish and shellfish products covered by the COL labeling requirements to also be labeled as farm-raised or wild.

Suppliers are required to provide this information to the retailers. Retail industry organizations are suggesting to retailers that they modify supplier contracts to reflect the fact that they are responsible for ensuring that suppliers keep verifiable record keeping audit trails. Surefish can help suppliers develop their COL programs in order to meet these requirements. If you have questions regarding COL programs or need assistance please contact Allison at Allison@surefish.com.

Scallops - Delicious and Decorative - Beth Hartman



Any connoisseur of sea shells wouldn’t be without the prized scallop shell as part of their collection. Artists from Titian to Botticelli have captured their beauty in works of art. Any connoisseur of seafood would have to agree that regardless of the variety scallops are simply delicious.

The most common scallop in North American markets is the Atlantic sea scallop, also known as the King of scallops (why not Queen of scallops I wonder but that’s another article). Fished year round in the deep waters from Newfoundland to North Carolina they set the standard for flavor.

Buyers on the west coast also encounter another large variety from Alaskan waters, the weathervane scallop. Scallops cannot survive long out of the water and are usually shucked on board before delivery to the shoreside processors. Because of the distance from the fishing grounds in Alaska to a distribution point, virtually all of the Alaska catch is frozen at sea. Fortunately for me a taste test is part of our standard inspection and on the days we are inspecting these delectable morsels I do not bring a lunch, just a couple of lemon wedges.

For years many frozen seafoods have been treated with phosphates to reduce driploss, in particular sodium tripolyphosphate. After reports of abuse of the use of STP in the early nineties (especially with scallops) the FDA established maximum moisture content of 80% for the species, which is thought to be the maximum natural water content. If the moisture content exceeds 80% the product must be labeled “water added” rather than the popular “chemical free” label. Therefore moisture testing is usually requested on every scallop inspection we perform. More and more buyers have decided that a 100% natural product more than makes up for the driploss and the untreated scallops have a cleaner, sweeter flavor.

Last weekend I was at the seafood market where I noticed the large sea scallops were \$18.99 per pound. At this price you’ll want them to be “center stage” on your dinner plate. Don’t mask the delicate flavor with a heavy sauce and don’t over cook them. Most chefs will pan sear them over a high heat until both sides are brown yet still rare to medium rare in the center.

At my annual holiday bash I serve them chilled with cocktail sauce (I like to sear them in bacon fat). They are always the first item to disappear from the buffet table. Thanks to a recent inspection everyone’s favorite appetizer will again be “the belle of the ball”.

What is Happening Around the Surefish World - Gertrud Gastel

Surefish Alaska

Surefish Alaska has been working 7 days a week. Our staff of Surefish Dutch Harbor is keeping busy with water samples testing per EPA regulations. Seafood inspections of cod (eastern, western and round), Pollock (eastern and western) and lots of blocks. We do it all: pin-bone in, pin-bone- out, deepskinned and mince. In addition the professionals in Dutch Harbor perform MSC audits for Pollock and Alaska Salmon. If you need our services please contact our Alaska Laboratory at 907-581-4904

Surefish Asia

Our lab is located in Pusan Korea. Pusan is one of the busy ports in Asia. Buyers, sellers, and traders from around the world have turned to Surefish Asia for assistance with their seafood transactions. For the past few months we have been extremely busy with Crab, salmon and Cod inspections. We are expecting to perform many Cod and Pollock inspections throughout the rest of the fall. For more information regarding our Surefish Asia operation please contact Lisa at 206-284-2686 or asia@surefish.com

Surefish Bellingham

The Bellingham Lab has been involved in shrimp inspections, both the Chinese 2pc IQF and the Chinese and Ecuador block shrimp. The branch was also doing some traveling to Dutch Harbor to assist our staff with Pollock and Flatfish inspections. For the month of September and October, Surefish Bellingham will be performing shrimp, Opilio crab and salmon inspections in Vancouver, B.C. and Bellingham. Surefish Bellingham also offers FDA required HACCP Training once or twice a year. Give us a call at 360-650-9343. Seafood quality is our only business.

Surefish Seattle

Surefish Seattle kept busy throughout the months of June and July with the Alaskan Quality Seafood projects in Kenai, Cordova, Bristol Bay, Chignik and Kodiak. The professionals at Surefish Seattle were also involved in Cod, Pollock, Squid, Scallop and surimi inspections as well as histamine tests and FDA reconditioning sensory evaluations on Mahi Mahi and Yellowfin Tuna. The staff was also doing some traveling to Oregon to perform fillets inspections on Whiting and QC/Sanitation inspections. Our branch is already preparing for the Fall roe auctions. Please feel free to call us for more detailed information at 206-284-1472.

Surefish Vietnam

We will dispatch members of our HACCP auditing team to Vietnam in the middle of November to work with our local staff in Ho Chi Minh City. They will be traveling to several sites around Vietnam working with different companies that have implemented HACCP programs. These companies will be audited for compliance. If you would like more information regarding our services in Vietnam please contact Bart Cox at 206-284-2686.

Surefish

If you need more information about our company, please visit us on our web site www.surefish.com or visit us at the West Coast Seafood Show (booth #911) in October. See you there!

Water Sampling - Karin Holbrook

As required by 18 AAC 34.080. Potable and Marine water must be sampled and tested for coliform bacteria before beginning operation and then once every 30 days.

In Dutch Harbor, many of the positive water samples we see are caused by human error or an incorrect sampling method. Below are tips to assure that the above is not the cause.

1. Wash hands before taking sample and do not compromise the sterility of the bottle in any way.
2. Always take samples from **COLD** water spigots. Don't sample from mixed (warm and cold) faucets, use sinks with a separate cold water valve.
3. **Don't sample from hoses.** Hoses are a permeable material that can harbor bacteria.
4. Remove any screens from spigots.
5. Clean faucets and spigots with rubbing alcohol and wipe with a paper towel, then allow water to run for 5 minutes before sampling. This assures that you're sampling just the water not the surface area around it and that you're not sampling stagnant water. Do not use the hand dip near by to clean your sample area, even though dips contain sanitizers there could easily be contaminants in the dip.
6. **Fill the bottle to ABOVE THE 100 ml line.** Exactly 100 ml is needed to analyze the sample and the lab will have to invalidate samples with <100
7. **Use only sample bottles supplied by ADEC approved labs.** Don't use another utensil to take your sample and then transfer it into the container provided by the lab.
8. Don't rinse out the container previous to sampling. There is a chemical in the bottle which is needed to consume the free chlorine (unused chlorine) so that there is no chemical interference with the media used. This chemical doesn't affect the cleanliness of your water.
9. Avoid overflowing the container; simply pull the container out of the stream of water when the desired amount is in the bottle.
10. Store the sample in a refrigerator below 10°C, until delivery. **DO NOT FREEZE THE SAMPLE.**
11. **Marine samples need to be taken at least 3 miles outside of the bay of Dutch Harbor. The wastewater treatment plant in Dutch Harbor discharges all of their waste into the bay as well as the occasional vessel. It's not worth the gamble and it's against regulation.**
12. Samples are considered "old" after 30 hours but results are accepted by the ADEC up to 48 hours after the sample is taken. However, efforts should be made to get the sample analyzed as soon as possible.

If your samples turn up total coliform positive, fecal coliform positive, or invalid due to turbidity, it may be in your best interest to perform a high chlorine flush. This can be done by opening all valves, hoses, sinks, and allow the water to run through the system until chlorine readings are high but below 200 ppm. Then close all valves for at least a 10 minute contact time. This assures that the chlorine contacts more surface areas of the pipes and allows adequate time for the chlorine to take care of the total coliform and other bacteria contaminations. A good time to perform this is during cleanups and meal breaks.

If you have questions regarding water sampling or testing please contact Karin at 907-581 4904 or alaska@surefish.com

Surefish Employee Bio: Janis Ward - Bookkeeper

Name: Janis Ward
Title: Bookkeeper/HACCP Consultant
Years with Surefish: 6

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Seattle but spent my childhood summers on a small island on the west side of Cook Inlet, Alaska where my family had a salmon cannery.

What was your first job?

My first paying job was for my father during the height of the salmon season pushing boxes from upstairs in the web loft down an iron guide to the main floor of the warehouse to the casing machine when I was 11 years old. I also was assistant storekeeper at the cannery store but didn't get paid for that until I was 13 or 14 years old but that was only because the egg house needed assistance and I got paid for that. I screened chum, pink and king eggs for bait. We started processing sujiko when I was 16. My first job as a result of earning a BS in Food Science and Technology from the University of Washington was as the Head Lab Technician at Nalley's Pickle Plant in Tacoma.

How did you become involved in the seafood industry?

As you can see from the previous answer, I was involved in the seafood industry at an early age. I actually was born into the industry. My grandfather acquired the Chisik Island cannery; Snug Harbor Packing Company along with several partners during the 1920s and 1930s. I personally went north as a two-week-old infant.

Why Surefish?

A Surefish supplier I happened to know recommended Surefish and Ted Evans to me. However, I did nothing to follow up on that until I found a tiny want ad looking for a HACCP trained individual.

What is the best aspect of your job?

Bookkeeping is the glue that holds a company together. It doesn't matter how well the rest of the business runs if the bookkeeping doesn't happen. This is the reason I felt compelled to take over the bookkeeping when the position was offered. It is really neat when a stack of invoices is entered and neater still when the money comes in. Bookkeeping is a reactive occupation. Output is directly proportional to input and required reporting such as taxes. Most everything has a time that it needs to be done but then there are times of waiting. Waiting for time logs, waiting for bills, waiting for checks, waiting for the mail, waiting for something to happen. The best aspect of my job is during those waiting periods where I can do little odd things associated with consulting such as research, proof reading or special projects.

What previous experience has helped you the most in your present position?

The term "the most" is very subjective. Many experiences came together to make me what I am. I have done some sort of bookkeeping since I was about 12 because the cannery store had a price list but no individually posted prices. Since we had to write down almost everything we sold and price it later, there was always a stack of bookkeeping to do. The cannery had several bookkeepers but most did very little with the store's accounts. I believe that the one bookkeeper who was a CPA and did take an interest in the store helped me the most by teaching me some of the ways to check for accuracy and to be consistent.

What are your hobbies? Gardening, Writing and Sewing

What is your favorite seafood dish? Halibut baked with onions and sour cream; but, king salmon prepared poached from early Spring run fish is a close second.



Janis Ward



Key Benefits of a Surefish Inspection

- Buying/selling decisions
- Suitability for use
- Internal auditing
- Letters of credit
- Confidentiality
- Multiple locations
- Efficient, independent and objective
- We know the industry and industry standards
- Our reports detail all important quality attributes and are recognized and used by companies around the globe