

Undercover Seafood Shopper

-By Summer Quinn

When most families decide to go out for seafood, fish and chips are the first thing that comes to mind, right? Preferably minced and breaded, soaked in so much oil and salt that their fish tastes just like chicken? Before I worked in the seafood industry I lived in Montana where access to fresh fish is fairly limited and fish that tastes like chicken is exactly what I had in mind whenever I got that once in a blue moon craving for fish.



everyone reading. Below is the example from a seafood counter of "Store A", and the disinformation I was given...

"Oh, it's a bruise." I was told of a blood spot "You know in the wild, when they are swimming around, getting beat up by the rocks and stuff... farmed fish never has bruises. Lots of people think farmed is bad. They don't know what they are talking about. Anything you hear is just half the story. You know, they need to keep it interesting, so they only give you half the information."

I have always been under the impression that it is the job of seafood counter staff to promote all of the seafood in the store, after all it is in their best interest. Dismayed by the fact that this woman was not glorifying everything at her counter, I walked out of "Store A" with a clear understanding of conspiracy theory.

If I had been doling out awards, "Store B" would be in 1st place for creativity. The person at that counter could probably teach everyone reading this a few things they did not know. The fish in the case was labeled "True cod", so when I asked if the big reddish pink fillet was cod she had to flip the fillet over and guess. Her conclusion; *"Yes, it is cod"*.

"Why is it so red?" I asked.

"I don't know, probably because they skinned it too close to the skin."

After this statement she changed her mind... *"It could have to do with their diet. You know how there are white king salmon and red ones? That is because they probably have eaten mostly squid. This cod was caught in the Atlantic it probably ate a lot of shrimp, and that is why it is red. You know that saying you are what you eat? Well this proves it."*

True cod from Atlantic huh? So far, I understand why the consumer is confused and wants fish that tastes like chicken? Stay tuned for the next undercover mystery shopping spree.

Four years ago Surefish employed me, and if it were not for that stroke of luck, my mind would probably be on everything but seafood. My point is that when you come from a place, or a home, where seafood is not part of your daily diet, you know literally zilch about it. To this day, if it were not for chance, I would never eat our slimy friends from the deep blue sea. Now I eat them at least once a day. They have become my protein of choice.

Many times it has crossed my mind that there are countless potential fish enthusiasts, who stem from coast to coast, that think the way I used to think. Who is there to show them the light? There are not enough jobs on all of the vessels, in all of the plants, at all of the seafood counters, in all of the world to educate the fishless masses. It is a duty left entirely up to people behind the seafood counters, for those are the places one of the unknowing may drift. If they find themselves asking a question regarding the quality of a species, I have contemplated what will they be told.

Upon pondering such questions, I decided to embark on an ongoing undercover investigation. This article is the first of a series that will demonstrate the knowledge of various seafood counters at grocery stores around the Seattle area. After abstracting my information, I will report what I have learned to

What is the MSC Certification Program?

Over-fishing now threatens the continued survival of fish stocks around the world and the 200 million jobs they sustain. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) was created in 1996 by Unilever and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to devise a market incentive for fishery operations to reverse this trend. Now fully independent, the MSC offers real hope to the world's marine environment. Capitalizing on the vast surge of consumer concern about the state of our planet, the MSC has developed a labeling scheme for sustainable seafood products which provides a real incentive for fisheries, large and small, all over the world to be managed for the long-term.

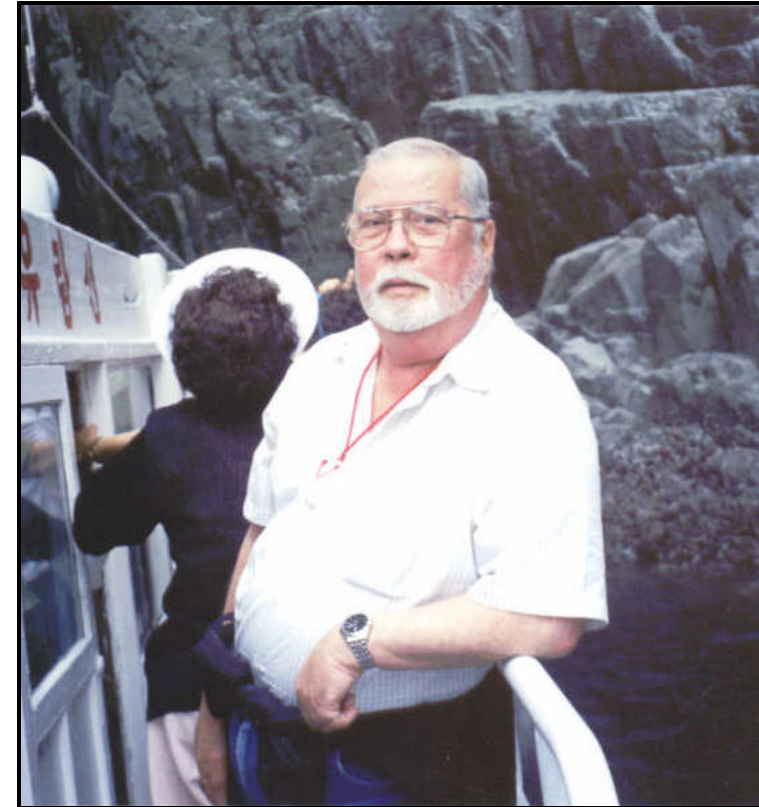
The MSC 'eco-labeling' scheme is based around a set of 'Principles and Criteria', produced by MSC through an

international consultation process, that describe indicators against which a fishery may be compared to enable it to make a claim that the fish it sells on to retailers, processors and consumers alike emanates from a well-managed and sustainable source.



An organization wishing to use/apply the MSC logo on packaging for seafood products must undergo Chain of Custody certification to ensure that the products are sourced from a sustainable fishery. For more information on MSC chain of Custody contact Allison at 206-284-2686 or allison@surefish.com

In Memory - Ronald Sharpe 1934 - 2003



Ron Sharpe, our dear friend and colleague, passed away April 19, 2003 after a lengthy battle with cancer. Surefish's "Asiaman" worked in residence in Pusan, Korea for several years, then returned to Seattle where he worked as our Asia Laboratory Coordinator for the remainder of his four years with Surefish. Throughout his treatment he kept his sense of humor and professionalism. He spent some 20 years in the seafood industry, on top of his 20 years in the U.S. Marine Corp prior to his involvement with seafood.

He was a positive influence on all those he worked with and his absence will be a profound loss.

He is survived by his wife Micha, six children, eleven grand children and five great grand children.

The New Bioterrorism Act UPDATE -by Allison Corcoran

Last year Congress passed the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 – usually called simply the Bioterrorism Act. The act requires that the law go into effect on December 12, 2003 (even if the final regulations have not been issued). The FDA is responsible for carrying out Title II of the Act – Protecting the Safety and Security of the Food & Drug Supply. This Title contains several sections that are especially relevant to our clients:

Section 305 – Registration of Food Facilities - requires domestic and foreign facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for human or animal consumption in the United States to register with the FDA by **December 12, 2003**. There will be no fee associated with registration. Exempt from the registration are farms; retail food operations; restaurants; non-profit operations that prepare food for, or serve food directly to, consumers; and fishing vessels not engaged in processing [as defined in 21 CFR 123.3 (k)]. The FDA is proposing that registration may be electronic, via the Internet, or by paper through surface mail, though they prefer electronic registration.

Section 306 -- Establishment and Maintenance of Records - establishes requirements regarding the establishment and maintenance, for not longer than two years, of records by persons (excluding farms and restaurants) who manufacture, process, pack, transport, distribute, receive, hold, or import food. The records that must be kept by these regulations are those needed to allow FDA to identify the immediate previous sources and immediate subsequent recipients of food, including its packaging. The same exclusions as for Section 305 apply.

Section 307 – Prior Notice of Imported Food -- requires that FDA receive prior notice of food imported or offered for import into the U.S. beginning on **December 12, 2003**. This is to allow FDA time to review, evaluate, and assess information before a food product arrives, and shift resources to target inspections, to help intercept contaminated products, and to help ensure movement of safe food to market. Under the proposed rule, a purchaser or importer (or their qualified agent) who resides or maintains a place of business in the United States, would be required to submit prior notice of the importation of food.



The proposed regulations for Sections 305 and 307 were published in the Federal Registrar, and the comment period for those sections is now closed. The FDA is now in the process of reviewing the comments and preparing to draft the final rules. They are hoping to have the final rules ready in October. Section 306 is currently open for comments. Based on comments received, the FDA has already announced that they will make the prior notice requirement easier by allowing food importers to provide necessary information to both the FDA and Customs at the same time, using Customs' Automated Commercial System.

For the complete draft of the proposed regulation go to the FDA's website at: <http://www.fda.gov/oc/bioterrorism/bioact.html>

Mercury and Seafood - Gertrud Gastel

Fish is an important source of high-quality protein, vitamins and minerals.

FDA seafood specialists say that eating a variety of types of fish does not put anyone in danger of mercury poisoning. It is when



people eat fad diets – frequently eating only one type of food or one particular species of fish – that they put themselves in risk. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has developed special advice concerning mercury in some fish for pregnant women and women who may become pregnant. FDA advises pregnant women and women of child bearing age who may become pregnant to avoid eating shark, swordfish, tilefish and king mackerel species that can approach the action limit. They can safely eat 12 ounces per week of cooked fish; just pick a variety of different species. The FDA is aiming to revise its consumer advisory by September 30. (The Wave)

Most asked Questions & Answers

How much methyl mercury is found in fish?

Mercury level for most fish range from less than 0.01 parts per million (ppm) to 0.5 ppm. The average concentration in the 10 most popular commercial species is less than 0.3 ppm. The FDA action level for fish intended for human consumption is 1 ppm. Although there are a few species which can reach 1 ppm, this level is set 10 times lower than the lowest level associated with health issues in adults.

What is mercury?

Mercury is an element and a metal. It is released into the atmosphere both by nature through mercury vapor and through industrial wastes, including fuels. Methyl mercury binds tightly to the proteins in fish tissue, including muscle. Cooking does not significantly reduce the methyl mercury content of the fish.

How does methyl mercury get into fish?

Mercury finds its way into the food chain when naturally occurring mercury (such as from underwater volcanoes) or mercury from air pollutants and rain is deposited into rivers, lakes, ocean and soil. Once in the water, bacteria transform the airborne mercury into methyl mercury that can be toxic. Fish absorb methyl mercury from water as they feed on aquatic organisms. In general, the larger and older a fish is, the more it will contain. This is due to the fact that methyl mercury accumulates over time.

Who monitors the levels of methyl mercury in our food supply?

In the USA, the responsibility for regulating mercury is shared by two federal agencies: the EPA and the FDA. The FDA regulates commercially sold fish and seafood and provides advice for the consumer, while the EPA regulates the amount of mercury level released into the environment. The EPA works with state governments to develop freshwater advisories.

For information on methyl mercury testing in fish and seafood, please contact our Seattle laboratory experts at 206-284-1472. They will be glad to help you.

Surefish personnel are the most professional in the industry

We go the extra mile to achieve client satisfaction.

In order to ensure the highest level of service and most up-to-date expertise, Surefish regularly sends staff for training. We have acquired the following qualifications:

- All inspectors are HACCP certified.
- Seafood HACCP Alliance HACCP “Train the Trainer” certified
- USDC/NMFS HACCP certified
- American Society for Quality (ASQ), Quality Auditor Certifications
- Seafood HACCP Alliance HACCP Sanitation Control Procedures “Train the Trainer” certified
- Oregon State University Certificate of Training-Surimi Technology School
- State of Alaska Drinking Water Certification
- Accreditation – Marine Stewardship Council
- Multiple Sensory Classes through FDA, NFPA and USDC for: Whitefish, Tuna, Mahi Mahi, Wahoo, Salmon, Shrimp, Scallops and Oysters
- Listeria Class
- University of Washington Certificate of Training – Salmon Roe Processing
- Independent Organic Inspectors Association – Inspector Certifications
- Microbiological Class
- University of Alaska Seafood Processor workshop
- Bioterrorism workshop
- Canned Salmon and Tuna workshop
- MSC Chain of Custody Project Development and workshops
- Chemical Analyst training
- CHAP Auditor Training

Please feel free to contact us if you need any assistance or have questions regarding the above subjects.

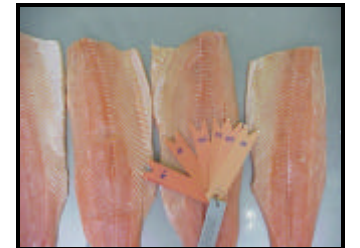
Key Benefits of a Surefish Inspection

- 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



Roses are red; violets are blue, so why do salmon have many hues? - Christine Keenan

The characteristic flesh color of salmon is caused by many factors. Salmon are known for their red, orange and pinkish colors. They gain their tints primarily from anthaxanthin and canthaxanthin, which are carotenoids, or naturally occurring pigments. Wild salmon get them from eating small shrimp, krill and some forms of algae, which are rich in these carotenoids. Farmed salmon are fed



more inexpensive forms of food, which do not contain these compounds, so their diet is supplemented with chemically synthesized forms, otherwise their flesh would be gray. The carotenoids have antioxidant properties and are necessary for reproductive health. Consumers have long been influenced by flesh color as an indicator of freshness and flavor, believing that the redder the flesh the better the fish. There is some truth to this, but then why are rare “White Kings” known for their rich butter flavor? White Kings are this way because they are genetically unable to synthesize the anthaxanthin they eat, thus they remain white. Flavor is more affected by fat and protein contents in fish. And this is where flesh color can be an indicator within each specie and river system. As fish concentrate on spawning, they cease to eat and live off of fat and protein reserves, and along with other morphological changes, the paling of their flesh indicates a reduction of fat and protein content and thus a poorer flavor. Also, we come to expect certain colors of each species to impart a particular flavor indicative of that species.

Check out our website:

www.surefish.com