

Fishing for Answers

Sustainable seafood rises to the fore as environmental groups bank up efforts to influence what's menued. Operators, in turn, flex their creativity in meeting customers' wish for fish.

The wave of the future has become the wave of today as more consumers recognize the importance of sustainability and the need for better practices. They're demanding that food be not only healthful for their bodies but also for the environment. They're seeking assurance that the seafood on the plate today won't become extinct tomorrow.

They want to know that the fisheries—perhaps thousands of miles in length and width—are being over-fished, which occurs when a population of fish is caught faster than it can replenish itself. And they want to know that farm-raised fish are being grown in an eco-friendly way.

How's a time-challenged operator to know what to buy to satisfy these concerns?

Luckily, there are many conservation groups, academic institutions, and aquariums that are partners in Washington-based Seafood Choices Alliance (www.seafoodchoices.com). Several Web sites you can visit for information on ocean friendly seafood. In fact, Monterey Bay Aquarium Food Watch, a Seafood Choices Alliance member, provides wallet-size indicators what's safe and what's as well as viable (i.e., sustainable) natives raised in your area of country.

The guide, an invaluable publication (142 pages, spiral-bound) is available from Seafood Choices Alliance. "Sourcing Sustainable: A Professional's Guide to Buying Ocean-Friendly Fish and Shellfish" presents at least two illustrated pages of information for each fish—from abalone and catfish to high tilapia (U.S. farmed) and salmon—as well as conservation notes,

the most of local species—no matter if they're situated in a coastal area or an inland one native to any one of hundreds of freshwater fish.

In-organic: On balance, experts advise that you know your suppliers: visit them in person, visit their Web sites, ask questions about their operations and make them aware of your desire to receive only sustainable product. There is one piece of information in particular, gleaned from the Seafood Choices Alliance publication, that operators should be aware of: there are no aquaculture-specific standards in the U.S. at the present time.

The guide says: some fish producers (including several shrimp farmers in the U.S.) "may obtain organic certification and market their products as organic as long as they comply with USDA's general organic livestock rules...salmon, raised on feed that includes non-organic ingredients such as fish

Xanterra Parks and Resorts, the Greenwood Village, CO-based management company, is doing its part in serving only environmentally sustainable fish. All of its national park accounts are ISO 14001 certified. ISO 14001 is an international Environmental Management System (EMS) standard published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

"The goal of ISO 14001 is to support environmental protection and pollution prevention," notes Tim Stein, Xanterra's corporate director of food and beverage. "It's widely used in Europe and Japan, but the certifica-

FSD TAKEAWAY

LEARN what guides and guidelines are available to assist you in seafood procurement.

SEE how operators balance

