

Today's Choices Provide Future Fish

by Tina Kelly, Ocean Advocate,
Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre

Fish oil is said to reduce the risk of breast cancer and heart disease and is used in the treatment of depression. Fish oil also helps our brain, joints, digestive tract and skin. The media, health magazines and physicians encourage us to take a daily fish oil supplement and to eat fish several times per week. It appears the omega 3 fatty acids found in fish oil are the magic bullet to cure all that ails us. But once the ocean is depleted of the fish that are the source of this magic oil, what will we depend on? What will cure the ocean of overfishing?

A key part of protecting global fish stocks is to consume only sustainably caught seafood. The buzzword "sustainable seafood" is becoming commonplace, and making sustainable seafood choices is getting easier. With the click of a mouse, we can get the information needed to make informed seafood purchases. The Ocean Wise program, found at www.vanaqua.org, is a conservation initiative started by the Vancouver Aquarium that certifies retailers and restaurants who sell or serve only sustainably caught seafood.

According to the Ocean Wise website, a sustainable species is:

- 1) Abundant and resilient to fishing pressures;
- 2) Well managed with a comprehensive management plan based on current research;
- 3) Harvested by a method that ensures limited bycatch on

non-target and endangered species; and

4) Harvested in ways that limit damage to marine or aquatic habitats and negative interactions with other species.

Bottom trawling is one fishing method that fails to meet at least two of these four criteria. Using a large weighted net that is dragged across the bottom of the sea, bottom trawling is known to have the greatest negative impact on marine habitats and high bycatch rates. Any species the fishing gear retains that is not part of the intended catch is considered bycatch. This includes species of no economic value and individuals that are below the minimum size for retention.


Damage to the sea floor done by bottom trawling is catastrophic. Online photos and video show sea bottoms before and after a bottom trawl. The before is colourful, rich in diversity and abundant in species. The after is a dull, barren landscape similar to images of the surface of the moon. Flounder, sole, rockfish, lingcod, spiny dogfish and Pacific cod are species targeted by bottom trawling in Canada's Pacific region.

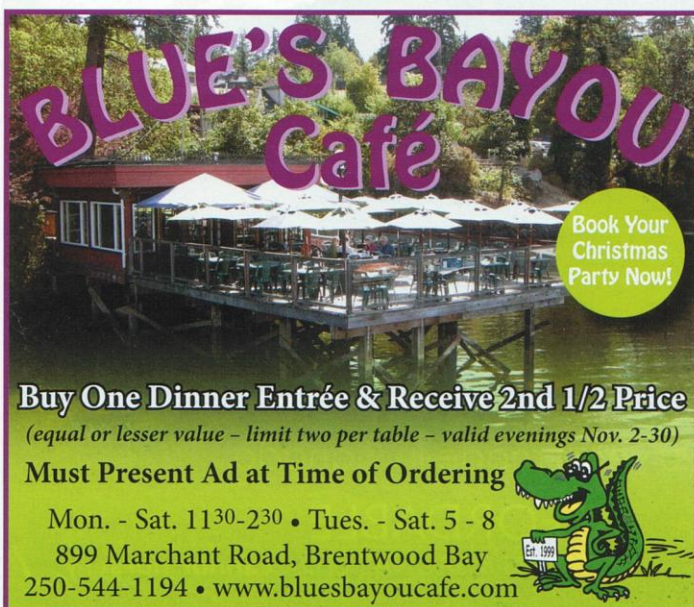
Other fishing practices may not destroy the sea floor but also produce large amounts of bycatch. Loveable megafauna, such as dolphins, marine birds and endangered turtles and sharks are commonly caught and killed in various types of nets and lines.

More than 25 restaurants in the Greater Victoria area are certified Ocean Wise. For at-home dining, visit the seafood department of Thrifty Foods. There you can choose recipe ingredients that haven't damaged local or global fish stocks. Look for the Ocean Wise logo.

If you don't see the logo, ask questions: where do the fish or prawns originate and how were they harvested?

An additional aid in choosing not only sustainable seafood but seafood low in mercury and other contaminants is the SeaChoice wallet card. This small card is a quick and easy reference where seafood choices are divided into three categories, "Best Choice," "Some Concerns" and "Avoid." Download the wallet card or iPhone app at www.seachoice.org. A wallet card geared specifically at choosing sustainably caught sushi ingredients is also available.

As consumers, we have power. What we purchase for our dinner plate today affects the options our children and our children's children will have down the road. Choices we make now can help ensure healthy oceans for the future. 



BLUE'S BAYOU
Café

Book Your Christmas Party Now!

Buy One Dinner Entrée & Receive 2nd 1/2 Price
(equal or lesser value - limit two per table - valid evenings Nov. 2-30)

Must Present Ad at Time of Ordering

Mon. - Sat. 11³⁰-2³⁰ • Tues. - Sat. 5 - 8
899 Marchant Road, Brentwood Bay
250-544-1194 • www.bluesbayoucafe.com