Subscribe
Starting at 99 cents
Members
Sign In

At college campuses, it's Sustainable Seafood 101



MATTHEW CAVANAUGH FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Fish curry, made with locally sourced redfish, is served at a UMass Amherst dining hall.

By Lisa Zwirn | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 08, 2016

AMHERST — At UMass Amherst's Hampshire Dining Commons, one of many places to eat on campus, there is always a selection of seafood dishes for students to choose from. Recently, at lunchtime, Ronan Maza, a junior from New York City, opts for a plate of Ecuadoran-style redfish, or encebollado, a traditional fish stew with yuca, tomatoes, cilantro, and pickled onions. "It

matters what fish I'm eating," says Maza. "I prefer sustainably fished." Information cards indicate that the redfish is responsibly harvested from the Gulf of Maine.

Elsewhere in the circular dining room, Josiah Boirard stands in line for a fried local hake wrap. The freshman from North Attleborough likes seafood because it's a healthful protein. "My parents are from the Caribbean, so I'm familiar with all kinds of fish," he says. The students' other options that day are redfish curry, mussels steamed in saffron broth, seafood and sausage paella, and Atlantic pollock with avocado, corn, and tomato salsa.

Engaging today's college students — tomorrow's purchasing generation — is a goal for most marketers, and the Portland-based Gulf of Maine Research Institute is no exception. Educating young adults is one way, says Kyle Foley, GMRI sustainable seafood brand manager, "to achieve an ecologically and economically sustainable seafood and fishing industry in the region."

Last fall, with GMRI's help, UMass Amherst executive director of auxiliary enterprises Ken Toong and his management team started buying more local seafood. "It's the right thing to do to support the local community and jobs," says Toong. Students are on board, if not nudging the administration along, as surveys reveal that they're interested in a diverse selection of tasty, healthful, local, and sustainable foods. "Students are demanding more responsibility in our sourcing," says Garett DiStefano, director of residential dining. These are, after all, the millennials (approximately 16 to 34 years old), who recently surpassed baby boomers as the country's largest generation.

GMRI's Foley, who works with a dozen colleges, knows that attracting millennials to this cause is an important bottom-up approach. It appears to be having an impact. "There's been a great response from students when they

hear that the fish they're being served is responsibly harvested from the Gulf of Maine," she says, "and that by choosing it, they and the schools are having a direct impact on fishing communities."



4 simple steps you can take to eat sustainable seafood

There are plentiful fish in our waters, specifically in the Gulf of Maine, which stretches from Nova Scotia down to Cape Cod.

Five underutilized species — Acadian redfish, Atlantic pollock, dogfish, whiting, and Atlantic mackerel — have been targeted for full-court press. Each is abundant and harvested well below sustainable quotas due to lack of demand. That's where the college students come in. Unlike old-time New Englanders who can't seem to shake their stubborn appetite for staples like cod and haddock, millennials appear willing to try lesser-known species.

Of the five, dogfish may be the toughest sell. Atlantic spiny dogfish, a small shark, is unfortunately named — according to the FDA it must be called either dogfish or cape shark — and has a meatier texture than familiar flaky white fishes. Sourcing dogfish can be difficult, says Wellesley College executive chef

Keith Tyger, but the reviews are good when he uses it in dishes like chipotle-flavored, tortilla-crusted baked dogfish. “So much comes down to preparation,” he says.

At two Maine schools, University of New England, in Biddeford and Portland, and Colby College in Waterville, students are eating a new product called “shark bites”: large chunks of dogfish prepared with a gluten-free coating, baked, and served for fish and chips or in tacos. Seafood distributor Ipswich Shellfish Group worked with Framingham’s Elevation Brands to produce the item. “We were looking to bring a product to market that supports local fishermen,” says Dana Bartholomew, sales and marketing director for the Ipswich company. Of the approximate 22 million pounds of dogfish landed on the East Coast, most is exported to Europe, much of it destined for Britain’s classic fish and chips.

Dan Roy, UNE’s area general manager for Sodexo, the company that manages the food service program for both UNE and Colby, says students have enjoyed various preparations of local seafood, including fajitas-style hake, lemon-dill redfish, and shark bites tacos. “They’re not looking for cod or haddock,” he says.

Wellesley College’s Tyger supplements regular seafood deliveries with local fish from Boston’s Red’s Best for the “Fresh Catch of the Week.” Student favorites include redfish tacos, crab-stuffed redfish fillet, the “Cape Cod Reuben” (fried pollock with Swiss cheese, slaw, and Russian dressing), and Cantonese-style braised pollock. The chef says that because “local” means

Twee Share 0

can help [fishermen’s] families.”

Comments

At UMass Amherst, where clam chowder is more popular than chicken soup, Yuhan Duan says she doesn’t care what fish dishes are on the menu, she likes them all. “I just love seafood,” says the junior from Beijing. Duan seems to be

representative of her
UMass peers who gobble up seafood at a rate of 21 pounds per year versus the average American consumption of 14 pounds.

At Harvard, students are interested in local and healthful foods and ask lots of questions, says Crista Martin, director for strategic initiatives and communications for dining services. When it comes to the seafood dishes served, she says, “They’re focused far more on the preparation than the fish.” That may be a key message when catering to food-savvy millennials: It has to taste good, and if it does, they’ll eat it.

UMass Amherst chef de cuisine Bob Bankert agrees. “It’s an easy sell when it’s visually appealing and tastes great.” Students like his cashew-crusted baked pollock with jicama mango slaw and lightly fried pollock with sweet chile glaze. Next semester he plans to introduce Atlantic mackerel, a stronger-tasting fish (similar to bluefish), prepared with robust Korean flavors. “Whiting is a tougher application for us,” he says, because it’s a small, lean fish with delicate fillets that can overcook quickly.

Students are the future seafood consumers in restaurants and markets, says UMass Amherst’s Toong. He believes that the ground-up approach of exposing them to local seafood will make them more adventurous buyers down the road. Now all they have to do is learn how to cook.

Lisa Zwirn can be reached at lisa@lisazwirn.com.

Get Today’s Headlines from the Globe in your inbox:

1 of 5 free articles. Subscribe now

Privacy Policy

0 COMMENTS

Recommended for you



Celebrities don tuxedos, gowns to attend glitzy state dinner

Almost 200 people attended the dinner at the White House, including a number of well-known Canadians. MORE...



Millennials are living small

Millennials, who are entering the home-buying market in larger numbers, are driving down home size. MORE...



SHOPPING WITH

For Bode Miller, new life at home no less hectic

With no concrete plans to return to skiing — he's currently on hiatus — the New Hampshire native and six-time Olympic medalist Bode Miller is finding new ways to fill his days. MORE...



An Irish pub where civility is always on tap

Kevin Cullen was unaware that there was an Irish pub where, beyond the prohibitions on TV and music, swearing is not allowed. MORE...



NAMES

John Goodman to play former Police Commish Ed Davis in 'Patriots Day'

"Patriots Day" is the movie about the Boston Marathon bombings that will star Mark Wahlberg. MORE...

NAMES

Red Sox reporter Jessica Moran resigns amid questions about manager John Farrell



"I have stepped away from Comcast SportsNet as I thought it was in my best personal and professional interest to do so," Moran wrote in a text to the Globe. MORE...



COMMENTARY | REBECCA OSTRIKER

Here's why Justin Trudeau tops the US presidential field

The famously dreamy new prime minister of Canada is visiting Washington. His presence serves as a reminder of the kind of fun we're not having. MORE...



'Millennial fatigue' and the rise of Gen Z

Gen Z'ers — those born between 1996 and the present — are hoping to avoid the mistakes that millennials have made. MORE...



COMMENTARY | TY BURR

Looking to head to Canada? A few things to consider

You'd leave behind some signal qualities of American life, but there are some benefits to living in the Great White North. MORE...



ASK THE GARDENER

How to prep your garden for spring planting

This is the time to prune and rake, before you have to worry about trampling delicate shoots. MORE...



The future of treating ACL tears: Less invasive surgery

About 400,000 people a year tear their knee ligament. Dr. Martha Murray has an idea for a less-invasive repair. MORE...

NAMES

Toni Morrison draws a crowd at Harvard



MORE...



Teens' brains make them more vulnerable to suicide

Researchers are beginning to understand exactly why a teenager's brain is so tempestuous. MORE...



Recipe for kale and Brussels sprouts salad

If you've dined at either Cook in Newton or Tryst in Arlington, there's a good chance you've had chef-owner Paul Turano's bright tasting salad. MORE...



NAMES

Jennifer Garner to attend screening in Chestnut Hill Sunday

We're told that the actress — Ben Affleck's soon-to-be ex — will attend a special screening of "Miracles From Heaven," as will the former patient and the Boston Children's Hospital doctor portrayed in the film. MORE...



Wayside Gourmet has everything your kitchen needs

Wayside Gourmet in Wayland has everything your kitchen needs. MORE...



Are Boston's dive bars disappearing?

Rising rents and land values are changing the places where neighborhood folks can feel comfortable just being themselves. MORE...

TRENDSPOTTING

Spring breakers go bigger than the beach

The top destination for spring break this year? Six of the top 20 places students plan to



go are in Europe. Cancun barely makes the top 10. MORE...



NAMES

Mark Wahlberg's Marathon bombing movie calling all extras

The casting call, open to anyone over the age of 18, will take place Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. MORE...



4 simple steps you can take to eat sustainable seafood

There are plentiful fish in our waters, specifically in the Gulf of Maine, which stretches from Nova Scotia down to Cape Cod. MORE...

© 2016 BOSTON GLOBE MEDIA PARTNERS, LLC