Institution: Gloucester Public Schools in Gloucester, Massachusetts

Food Service Operation Type: self-operated

Dining Operations: 3,076 students in the district and 882 at the high school. Approximately 40% of students participate in the lunch program.

Meals Served Per Day: the high school serves 352 meals per day

Species served: white hake, grey sole, and haddock

Frequency Seafood is Served: twice per month

Percent Local Seafood (of overall seafood spending): 100%

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Gloucester is a historic fishing community. Yet, when Food Service Director Phil Padulsky came to the district, there were Alaskan pollock fish sticks on the menu. He took these off the menu, assuming that something local could be found in Gloucester.

In the spring of 2014, Padulsky attended a panel with the USDA under-secretary organized by Mass. Farm to School and the Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which highlighted the unique “sea to school” movement taking place in the region. At this event, he met the director of Cape Ann Fresh Catch, a Gloucester-based Community Supported Fishery, who expressed significant interest in providing local seafood to the district. Cape Ann Fresh Catch offered to facilitate the procurement process with the local distributor, Ocean Crest, which distributes seafood from small boats landed in the port of Gloucester. Another partner in Padulsky’s efforts has been Food Corps, which had a service member placed in the district to support school gardens and local food procurement.

While the program currently only takes place at the high school, Padulsky would like to expand to the elementary level. He would also like to expand the promotional efforts by having a fisherman come to the classroom to talk to students about fishing.

Cape Ann Fresh Catch exclusively works with small boats landed in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

The boats all fish in the Gulf of Maine and primarily catch groundfish. Monitoring and compliance measures are in place to ensure acceptable harvest levels.

Cape Ann Fresh Catch supports a small diversified fleet who have a strong, personal connection to the sea and are driven by the desire to protect the ocean environment for future generations.
HOW THE SEAFOOD PROGRAM WORKS

The Food Service Director places his bi-weekly order with Cape Ann Fresh Catch (CAFC). CAFC then coordinates with Ocean Crest to secure the fish and deliver to the high school. The per pound price of the fish ranges from $4.25-$6.00, depending on the weather and season. While this is slightly higher than the price of conventionally available seafood, Padulsky has decided to exclusively source this seafood in order to support the local fishery. CAFC provides much of the marketing materials for the seafood, including sandwich boards with photos of local fish and photos of local fishermen in their boats. In addition, the FoodCorps service member has supported the district by organizing taste testing of the new menu items in the cafeteria.

While CAFC reports that school sales are currently a break-even operation for them, they view such sales as an important part of both their mission and of the long-term sustainability of the fishery. CAFC has invested significant time in developing their school program, including extensive training for food service staff. The program continues to evolve and CAFC expects that improvements will make their school sales more efficient and eventually more profitable. If the school diversifies the species of fish they will serve, there is also greater opportunity for higher sales volumes and more profitable sales.
LESSONS LEARNED

Taste testing has proven essential for getting students to try the new menu items. Community partners have also been key to the program, providing both procurement and promotional support. These non-profit community partners have also been able to patiently develop the program even though it is not yet highly profitable.

LEARN MORE

The Northeast Region of the National Farm to School Network is an active group of farm to school innovators who work within their states and regionally to advance farm to school through networking, peer sharing, project implementation, policy, and convenings. Learn more about the regional Network and get connected by visiting www.farmtoschool.org/our-network/northeast-region.

To learn more about farm to institution efforts across New England, visit www.farmtoinstitution.org.

RECIPES

Baked Fish with Cracker Crumb & Lemon: www.farmtoinstitution.org/recipe/baked-fish-cracker-crumb-lemon

For more farm to institution recipes, go to www.farmtoinstitution.org/tools#recipes