**Institution**: Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts

**Food Service Operation Type**: self-operated

**Dining Operations**: 6,700 undergraduates participate in the meal plan. The campus has 13 undergraduate dining halls, one kosher kitchen, and 15 retail cafés.

**Meals Served Per Year**: 5 million

**Species served as a part of residential dining program**: Atlantic pollock, skate, [Acadian redfish](#), and white hake

**Total Volume Served**: 3,000 lbs of Red’s Best locally caught seafood served per month, with an additional 8,000 lbs of MSC or GMRI certified seafood from North Coast served per month

**Frequency Seafood is Served**: 5 to 7 entrees per week in residential dining

**Percent Local Seafood (of overall seafood spending)**: 25% is Red’s Best locally caught seafood

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OVERVIEW OF THE SEAFOOD PROGRAM

Harvard University Dining (HUDS) has two primary seafood suppliers: Red’s Best and North Coast Seafoods. While North Coast provides some of the seafood in the sustainable seafood initiative, it is Red’s Best that has offered Harvard a unique all-local seafood option. Red’s Best serves as an aggregator from a number of small boats, processing the fish and selling this “catch of the day” to Sysco. Harvard orders the “catch of the day” from Sysco, and Sysco delivers to the university.

HUDS has agreed to purchase a “catch of the day” from Red’s Best at a fixed price that assures a fair and stable price is paid to the fishermen. The species of fish offered through this “Catch of the Day” varies, but regularly includes pollock, hake, and redfish. These species are similar enough to allow for the same preparation method.

HUDS markets the “catch of the day” with a poster and point-of-sale materials describing the fish and the boat from which it came. This marketing material is provided by Red’s Best, making implementation very easy for HUDS. Students have responded particularly well to this “Catch of the Day” and HUDS is increasing the frequency of these menu items as the available volume allows.

The purchases through Red’s Best represent approximately 25% of HUDS overall seafood purchases. The vast majority of the remaining purchases are either Marine Stewardship Council certified or Gulf of Maine Research Institute certified and are provided by North Coast Seafoods.

SEAFOOD CRITERIA

Working with seafood expert Barton Seavor, Director of the Healthy and Sustainable Food Program at Harvard School of Public Health’s Center for Health and the Global Environment, HUDS established a program to improve the overall sustainability of their seafood.

All seafood purchased must meet any combination of the following criteria:

1. Certified by a recognized resource
2. Locally/domestically sourced
3. An abundant species
4. Where appropriate, off-cuts used to ensure no waste of fish

All products are then evaluated for the following additional criteria:

1. Price – good for HUDS and for the fishermen
2. A volume available for HUDS’ scale of ordering (700-1,200 lbs per service)
3. Customer taste/choice
4. Available in a form HUDS can prepare (i.e. already filleted)
LESSONS LEARNED

HUDS has identified several reasons why their local and sustainable seafood program has been successful. Based on their experience, they offer the following tips:

1. Create recipes for the fish that are available rather than trying to source fish to meet a particular recipe. Integrate purchasing at the front end of menu planning to increase sustainability. Have the procurement team provide a list of sustainable options for the menu planners and be aware of seasonality of fish and seasonal catch limits.

2. Partner with your vendor to determine what fish is already available through their sources. Don’t assume they aren’t already working on this – they probably are and have already done much of the leg-work.

3. IQF (Individually Quick Frozen) is acceptable for any fish (thanks to advances in on-boat technology)

4. An established vendor is a vital partner. Individual boats or small cooperatives can rarely meet the volume needs of a large university.

5. Aquaculture is an important part of the program, but it has to be responsible. There are certifications that can evaluate this.

6. Due to high volume needs, it is more responsible NOT to buy some species.

7. Under-utilized species are highly sustainable, but require a partnership (an aggregator like Red’s Best) to match a specific species and catch to your volume (and price) needs.

8. Slow down: tackling a whole category all at once does not allow for effective communication. Tackle one item at a time to allow messaging, sampling and support, with adequate feedback from customers and operators.

9. You do not need to be certified yourself (by MSC or others), especially if you are not going to follow a single source of certification. Certifying your institution has the potential to confuse and discredit what you are doing if you are not supporting a single source of certification exclusively.
FINE’s Farm & Sea to Campus Project aims to increase the amount of local food served in colleges and universities. Get connected with the New England Farm & Sea to Campus Network by visiting www.farmtoinstitution.org/farm-college.

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

RECIPES

Catch of the Day with Brown Butter & Capers: www.farmtoinstitution.org/recipe/catch-day-brown-butter-capers

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