Institution: University of New Hampshire in Durham, New Hampshire

Food Service Operation Type: self-operated

Dining Operations: 11,200 students participate in the meal plan, which has an 83% participation rate. The campus has 3 dining halls, 7 retail locations, and they offer catering.

Meals Served Per Day: 17,000

Retail Transactions Per Day: 5,000

Species served as a part of residential dining program: Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested species such as Acadian redfish, Atlantic pollock, and white hake. Also, farmed mussels and wild caught skates are occasionally used for special events.

Species served as a part of catering program: Maine lobster, scallops, oysters, and farmed mussels

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INTRODUCTION

Total Volume Served:

Annual volumes of redfish and mussels:
- 1000 pounds of redfish
- 3000 pounds of mussels

Volumes at Local Harvest Event:
- 1000 pounds of Hake
- 318 pounds of lobster

Additionally, they use the following volumes of these sustainable non-local products:
- 6000 pounds of farmed salmon from Northern Harvest Sea Farms. This farm, located in New Brunswick, Canada, is the first salmon farm in the world to achieve 4 stars under the BAP (Best Aquaculture Practices) certification. It is the highest rated farmed salmon available.
- 1000 pounds of Alaskan beer-battered Pollock which is pre-battered and frozen and certified by Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management Program through the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

Frequency Seafood is Served: three times per week

Percent Local Seafood (of overall seafood spending): 28%

UNH Students enjoy sushi at the 2014 Sustainable Seafood Dinner. Photos courtesy of UNH Dining.
OVERVIEW OF THE SEAFOOD PROGRAM

UNH Dining staff met representatives of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) at a NACUFS (The National Association of College & University Food Services) conference several years ago, where they learned more about sustainable seafood options and the opportunities to collaborate with ASMI. This led to the purchase of sustainable products from Alaska and the first Sustainable Seafood Dinner in 2009, which has been a major event for UNH Dining ever since. A benefit that UNH found in working with ASMI, in addition to their high-quality products, was their well-developed educational and marketing materials and events.

As time went on, UNH Dining staff also realized that they wanted to do more to support the local products available to them from the Gulf of Maine, including New Hampshire harbors. Because of this realization, the Sustainable Seafood Dinner, which started with Alaskan sustainable seafood products in 2009, transitioned to a focus on local products over a period of five years. Though the event has continued to focus primarily on local products since 2013, they still incorporate some Alaskan products into their menus because of the high-quality and sustainability attributes.

Students respond very positively to the seafood items on the menu, especially when there are related promotions and education. Overall, the consumption of seafood has grown each year.

UNH Dining is currently sourcing 28% of their overall seafood purchases from local sources, which is about $50,000 per year out of the $180,000 spent on seafood. “Local” is defined as farmed, raised, caught, or manufactured within a 250 mile radius from the campus. They do aim to prioritize seafood that is landed by boats from within 250 miles of their campus whenever possible. Their level of seafood spending over time has risen, while spending on other proteins such as beef has decreased. UNH Dining staff convey to their vendors that they would like to source seafood from the Gulf of Maine via verbal communication rather than including it in written contracts, because they have found vendors to be responsive to these requests.

SEAFOOD CRITERIA

The criteria used to assess and verify a species as Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested are included below.

Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested Criteria

1. Fisheries are managed by competent authorities and have management plans in place that incorporate a science-based approach to ensure sustainability.

2. If stock sizes are below management target levels, whether due to natural or man-made causes, management plans are established that enable rebuilding within a specified time frame.

3. Sufficient data exists to determine harvest levels.

4. Monitoring and compliance measures are in place to ensure acceptable harvest levels.

5. Enforcement exists to ensure that harvesters follow regulations and to prevent illegal practices and unreported harvest.

For a more in-depth description of the standards, visit www.gmri.org/sites/default/files/gmrh_standard.pdf
OVERVIEW OF THE SEAFOOD PROGRAM

UNH Dining utilizes a variety of criteria and third-party labeling programs when sourcing their seafood, including the Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested program for verification of locally sourced species, Marine Stewardship Council certification and Best Aquaculture Practices or BAP for farmed species such as salmon, and purchasing directly from local fleets when possible. They also use Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch as a reference. For the locally sourced products, UNH Dining is able to provide educational information to their customers about the species that are being served and their origins in the Gulf of Maine. Lastly, as a result of student engagement, UNH signed onto a set of Slow Fish Principles in 2014 that were developed along with the international Slow Food organization. The principles help guide their seafood procurement towards supporting local fishermen, underutilized species, traceability, and education of their customers.

The focus of the Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested Program is on the Gulf of Maine, which spans an area between Nova Scotia and Cape Cod and is predominantly located off the coast of New England. The products verified under this program are all local and/or regional. You can see a map of the Gulf of Maine on the GMRI website. The overarching criteria that are used to verify a species as Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested are included in the sidebar on page 3.

In addition to placing a priority on locally-sourced products from the seacoast of New Hampshire and the Gulf of Maine, as well as on sustainable products that have third-party labels such as MSC certification, UNH Dining also takes into consideration the following criteria to help them source all of their seafood products: quality, freshness, pricing, processing, consistency, and volume. In order to continually improve their program, they are in regular communication with their suppliers about availability, pricing, and processing.

There is interest and room for growth in the sustainable and local seafood program at UNH. It will require overcoming some of the barriers associated with consistent volume of products that are available within the price range they are able to afford and in the processed form that they require.

SLOW FISH PRINCIPLES

UNH Dining principles support the international Slow Fish campaign and encourage community-based models of seafood purchasing.

Slow Fish Principles

1. Actively support the local fishing community by procuring and serving local seafood to the students and guests of UNH.

2. Commit to purchasing seasonal and available products from local fisheries. When capable of meeting demands, in-state products shall be the preference.

3. Negotiate prices that are mutually beneficial for the local fishing community and UNH Dining Services in order to create a truly viable local market.

4. Support local processors that uphold systems of traceability and honesty in labeling and are duly licensed and inspected by the jurisdiction in which they operate.

5. Commit to the inclusion of abundant but under-utilized species of fish caught in local waters, in an effort to drive market value.

6. Commit to education, so that students and guests of UNH Dining can increase their awareness of local seafood.
HOW THE SEAFOOD PROGRAM WORKS

UNH Dining sources these local and sustainable products primarily through their prime seafood vendor, North Coast Seafoods, which is able to provide large volumes of products on a consistent basis. It also delivers regularly and is willing to negotiate on pricing. UNH Dining has always had separate vendors for seafood and produce, which are not contracted, and their prime vendor/broadline distributor, PFG Northcenter, is focused on grocery items and meats. They do purchase some seafood through PFG Northcenter, such as frozen Pacific cod or some of the Alaskan products, and they have also purchased items such as salmon directly through the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute when they needed a higher volume than they could source otherwise through their vendors. They also occasionally work with Red’s Best and F/V Rimrack to source some of their local products.

North Coast tracks their products to the source of origin via product codes in their system, and this information is available to UNH upon request. Red’s Best provides this information via a QR code that arrives with the products, which allows customers to quickly learn which boat the product came from. F/V Rimrack is a local fishing operation in New Hampshire, so the Gulf of Maine origin is already known. UNH Dining has been able to source locally the following species, which also meet their needs around consistency, processing, and pricing: redfish, pollock, hake, and mussels.

The Purchasing Managers at each of the three UNH dining halls order the food that is needed, typically three times per week, and often the items arrive the next day. Each of the three dining facilities operates with a different cycle of menus, allowing for variation in what is offered across campus. The orders submitted to their prime grocery and meat vendor are automated and connected to their internal food service software program, which includes historical information that helps with forecasting the volume needed for their recipes. The orders to North Coast Seafoods are handled by phone.

The pricing for local seafood fluctuates, but UNH Dining has found the average pricing to be around $5.00 per pound. This is above the price point of $4.00 per pound that they are aiming for. Seafood tends to be in the mid-range for them when compared to other proteins, falling between beef on the higher end of the pricing spectrum and chicken on the lower end.
HOW THE SEAFOOD PROGRAM WORKS

In order to celebrate sustainable and local seafood, and to bring more awareness to students about these products, UNH hosts a Sustainable Seafood Dinner each spring. The 2014 dinner was a great example of the commitment to sustainable seafood, local fishing fleets, and student engagement. The event included partnerships with Slow Food UNH, the Sustainability Institute, NH Sea Grant, F/V Rimrack, and the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance. Learn more about the event here.

In addition to the annual dinner, there is also point-of-sale information provided about local products when they are served, and the chefs are occasionally able to educate the students at the service points. While UNH does share some seafood information through these outlets, they feel that this is an area that would benefit from additional resources and assistance.

In 2014, the students at UNH became very interested in seafood through the leadership of Spencer Montgomery, who founded a student group called Slow Fish UNH. The group collaborated with UNH Dining and many other groups on campus to help promote and plan the content for the 2014 Sustainable Seafood Dinner. With Spencer’s leadership, the Slow Fish UNH group was able to educate and activate many more students about the need for and benefits of supporting local fisheries. They did this through tabling and signage, as well as hands-on workshops where students could learn about fishing and how to prepare whole fish for cooking. Through their engagement and passion, they succeeded in encouraging the University to clarify its commitment to local seafood by signing onto the Slow Fish Principles in 2014. Such efforts for this commitment helped UNH Dining look more closely at alternatives such as underutilized species, which were a good solution because they were available at more reasonable prices. Their work also led to a connection with the local fishing vessel Rimrack, from which UNH has been able to source local scallops.

Spencer Montgomery holds up a whole fish as a part of a hands-on workshop for students to learn about preparing fresh fish for cooking. Below, students in Slow Fish UNH lead a workshop at Paul College. Photos courtesy of Slow Fish UNH.

Slow Fish UNH has continued to educate and activate students on campus with new leadership, and Spencer has graduated and obtained a position as the Seafood Operations Manager for Dole & Bailey, a regional distributor.
LESSONS LEARNED

Redfish is a product that would be a good fit for large-scale dining, if it were available in larger processed quantities at an affordable price point.

It is important to understand the various certification and watch programs and ensure proper HACCP programs are used in processing and procurement/delivery practices.

Special events provide a great opportunity to source directly from local fleets. Not only do you get a high-quality product, but also a great story to help promote the product to your customers. It also allows you to support your local economy. Include fishermen in the event, if you are able.

Student engagement in the education and promotion of local seafood products helps to amplify awareness about local food sourcing and its importance. For example, the students who helped plan the Sustainable Seafood dinner in 2014 were able to stand at the tables where the different local seafood recipes were being served and talk to their peers about the seafood, encouraging them to try the recipes and ensuring that they knew that it was sourced locally. This made the event that much more successful in creating awareness. Direct outreach to your customers from their peers, chefs, or local fishermen can make a big difference in their interest and level of awareness.

Maintaining the passion and awareness about these products, especially when they become more of a regular offering on the menu, can be very difficult when student engagement may not be consistent from year to year.

The availability of processed local seafood is critical in a high-volume food service environment. When several hundred pounds of fish are needed for one meal, it can be difficult for vendors to provide that amount consistently via the local fleets. Therefore, having access to freezing and storage becomes very important for the vendors to make sure this product can be available year round. Having some flexibility in your menu that allows for different types of white fish (Hake, Pollock, redfish) to be included in recipes can also help when working with local products.
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.

To learn more about underutilized species, see GMRI’s Out of the Blue Program: www.gmri.org/events/event-series/out-blue


UNH Events Archive, where you can learn more about their dining events: www.unh.edu/dining/events/archive

Slow Food UNH Student Organization: https://wildcatlink.unh.edu/organization/slowfoodunh
www.facebook.com/slowfoodunh

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**RECIPES**

Skate Wing Tacos  
Seafood Boat  
Scallops with Bacon & Polenta  
Hake Oscar  
Smoked Mussels Crostini  
Seafood Ceviche

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