

Food from the Sea

According to Leviticus 11:9-12, any fish that has fins and scales is kosher. These criterion rule out seafood such as eels, shellfish, and catfish. Fish is considered pareve and can be eaten with either milk or meat. There is no particular method of slaughter required for fish and, therefore, any fresh fish with fins and scales is kosher.

Fish are the last group of wild animals that are hunted for large scale consumption. As worldwide demand for fish has increased, wild fish populations can't keep up with our appetites, and find themselves threatened by overfishing (harvesting at faster rates than the population can reproduce) and by-catch (accidental death caused by trawls, dredges, long-lining, purse seining, and gill-netting). Scientists suspect that due to overfishing and by-catch, 90% of the large predatory fish populations have been depleted.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch is one of the leading organizations working to protect our oceans and fish populations. Seafood Watch has created several resources to help consumers make educated choices. Their "sustainable" certification for fish is based on the concept of "ocean friendly," which assesses damage to the environment during the fishing/fish farming process, health and abundance of the fish population, the amount of by-catch from the fishing process, and how well the fishery or fish farm is managed.

Tuna that is labeled "dolphin safe" means that no dolphins are intentionally harmed during the fishing process. This certification still allows fishermen to lower nets around schools of tuna and dolphins but they must lower the nets enough to allow dolphins to escape. Although the dolphin safe label has improved conditions for dolphins, research indicates that dolphins face health risks due to the stress of the fishing process: including being temporarily captured, which often results in heart problems, miscarriages, and mothers being separated from their calves, which results in the death of the calves. Therefore, Seafood Watch recommends purchasing hook and line caught canned tuna, instead of "dolphin safe" tuna.

Aquaculture, the process of farming fish in either fresh or saltwater, is the fastest growing method of animal food production. Nearly 50% of the fish consumed worldwide come from fish farms. Depending on the type of fish, location of farm, and farming practices, aquaculture can offer either a sustainable option or one that is equally problematic to wild caught fish. Farmed salmon is one such example. These salmon are

raised in coastal waters and, therefore, the pollution generated by the farm flows into the coastal water. Large numbers of salmon are kept in a pen, resulting in diseases and parasites, which can easily spread to wild salmon swimming nearby. It is not uncommon for the farmed salmon to break out of these pens and compete with wild salmon populations. Additionally, farm raised salmon require approximately 3 pounds of wild fish to produce 1 pound of farmed salmon, which is an unsustainable ratio. The most sustainable options for farmed fish include those which are herbivores or omnivores. Some of the best farm raised options include: arctic char, striped bass, and U.S. raised barramundi, cobia, tilapia, and rainbow trout.

HOW YOUR INSTITUTION CAN SOURCE AND USE SUSTAINABLE FISH:

- Print a sustainable fish pocket guide from Seafood Watch (or download their free smartphone app) and use this guide before purchasing fish.
- Serve Pacific sardines, which reproduce quickly and are currently abundant.
- Purchase fish that has the Marine Stewardship Council certification.
- Make your tuna salad with pole/troll caught albacore tuna from the U.S. or Canada.
- Make sure the lox on your bagel is wild-caught from Alaska.

Seafood Watch's Super Green List

Fish that are good for you and good for the earth, the Super Green List includes fish that meet these criteria:

- Low levels of contaminants (below 216 parts per billion [ppb] mercury and 11 ppb PCBs)
- The daily minimum of omega-3s (at least 250 milligrams per day [mg/d])*
- Classified as a Seafood Watch "Best Choice" (green)

The Best of the Best (July 2013)

- Atlantic Mackerel (purse seine from Canada and the U.S.)
- Freshwater Coho Salmon (farmed in tank systems, from the U.S.)
- Pacific Sardines (wild-caught)
- Salmon (wild-caught, from Alaska)
- Salmon, canned (wild-caught from Alaska)
- Albacore Tuna (troll- or pole-caught, from the U.S. of British Columbia)
- Sablefish/Black Cod (from Alaska and Canadian Pacific)