



Bulletin

May 2012

No.2

Can we eat....cod?

The simple answer is 'yes', despite the common public perception that it's a fish that is in trouble, but chefs need to be careful about where their Atlantic cod comes from.

While some stocks are healthy, others are not. The North Sea is among the areas that have been hugely overfished. In the 1970s and 1980s more than 200,000 tonnes was landed in most years, and sometimes the catch exceeded 300,000 tonnes, but stocks have fallen so dramatically that for several of the last 10 years scientists called for fishing to be halted. Cod is now recovering in the North Sea, but slowly and the Marine Conservation Society still recommends it be kept off menus. There are seven other fisheries that are also regarded as 'to avoid'.

However, cod from the Barents Sea, the Norwegian Sea and Icelandic waters are regarded by scientists as being sustainably fished and many thousands of tonnes are certified as such by the Marine Stewardship Council.



MSC

Herring from the West of Scotland has won MSC certification. It is the Scottish Pelagic Sustainability Group's third herring fishery with MSC certification, following the North Sea and the Atlanto-Scandian fisheries.

Brown crab, velvet crab and king scallops from the inshore waters

of the Shetland Islands received MSC certification in March. They are now just beginning to find their way into the marketplace.



Mackerel

Trade sanctions by the EU against Iceland and the Faroes for granting themselves huge mackerel quotas are increasingly likely. The European Parliament's fisheries committee has approved a new law giving the EU the legal right to impose economic sanctions and now just needs ratification.



What's in season

Dab

From about the middle of the month dabs will have finished breeding and come into season for restaurants.

Dover sole

These are now much more plentiful after a late start this year. Landings have been low in the last few weeks because of poor weather – as well as being more dangerous, fishing in difficult seas increases fuel costs – but once conditions improve so will the sole catches.

Hake

This was a struggling species but has enjoyed a recovery. Market demand has yet to catch up with landings so the species promises to be a bargain, at least for a while. Rated 3 if from Bay of Biscay and further north, though

if from Portuguese or Spanish waters is rated 5 by the MCS and classed as a fish to avoid.

Plaice

Having finished roe-ing, plaice – particularly from the North Sea – will start to become available in much better quality.

With thanks to Mike Berthet of M&J Seafood



Latest Marine Conservation Society advice

Bigeye and yellowfin tuna

The Bigeye longline, the yellowfin longline, the yellowfin purse seine with fish aggregation devices (FADs) fisheries in the Indian Ocean are no longer classified as fish to avoid, having boosted their rating from 5 to 3. Stocks swelled because fear of pirates kept fishermen away.

Albacore tuna

The longline fishery in the Indian Ocean has been downgraded and placed on the fish to avoid list because of fresh concerns about their numbers and the quantity of bycatch.



Chefs

What have you heard about fish supplies? Is the MCS getting it right? Are there species being landed in numbers that defy the official advice or is there an issue that you want to sound off about? Let Fish2fork know at info@fish2fork.com or on 020 7845 5852.



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A message from Tim Glover

This is the second bulletin from Fish2fork and it is a direct result of the sensational lunch provided and hosted by Hix Soho for the inauguration of the Chefs' Club.

The lunch provided more than just good food. It offered an opportunity for chefs, restaurateurs and others not just to meet up but to engage in a lively, constructive and occasionally hot debate - no need for tabasco sauce - about issues important to restaurants that prize sustainability.

Very clearly communicated to us at Fish2fork was the need for us to provide advice and guidance on which fish and seafood are OK to source and serve and which should be avoided. The Bulletin is our immediate response. Guidance on seafood sustainability can change as rapidly as menus so we intend to provide as much up to date information as possible in these Bulletins. We would love to receive any knowledge, evidence, intelligence or just plain rumour from our readers to help the process.



Other Chefs' Club developments include Chef Talk, a podium that offers the opportunity for chefs, suppliers, fishermen, NGOs and anyone else

to share opinions, stories, ideas and information on the Fish2fork website. Take a look, and let us have your ideas.



In addition, there will soon be a password protected forum where Chefs' Club members can blast away to their hearts' content between themselves - subject, of course, to common courtesy and the laws of libel. Post questions, seek advice, engage in banter, it will be up to you. Maybe between us we can make some inroads into the more impenetrable depths of sustainability.



Fish2fork needs your help to keep responsible sourcing of fish and seafood high on the wider industry's list of priorities. Consumer awareness is vital but the pressure must cascade down from the restaurant table through chefs, suppliers, wholesalers and fishermen. Your support of Fish2fork by getting involved in comment and dialogue and contributing ideas is essential as is recruiting fellow chefs. Why not get them to sign our demand for Common Fisheries Policy reform, including the end of discards, and to get

them to fill in a Fish2fork questionnaires the first stage in being rated? And on the subject of fisheries reforms. We need as many top rank chefs to sign the demand as possible if we are to be able to get the MEPs and Eurocrats to take notice. If you haven't signed already, please do so as soon as possible. There is a link on the Fish2fork home page, or go to <http://www.fish2fork.com/en-GB/statement.aspx>.



Finally, as you know, Fish2fork does not limit itself to the UK and is active in several other countries. As well as slowly but surely building rated restaurants in Spain, France and Belgium, we have started to publish reviews of restaurants in Switzerland.

The initiative is a joint venture with a small team of Swiss conservationists who wanted to bring Fish2fork to their country. They carry out the field work and the hope is that by the end of the year we will have rated 75 restaurants in Switzerland. It'll be interesting to see how they compare to UK restaurants.

We are also about to revisit our US site. We are gearing up to identify restaurants already on the site that are in need of a revised rating while others will be assessed and rated for the first time.

