

frugalcolor.com

Join us to experience the  
colorful side of business



CNNMoney.com

PRINT THIS

Powered by Clickability

DECEMBER 3 2007: 2:34 PM EST

## A (sustainable) fish story

**If it's not good for the planet, it's not on the menu at Washington, D.C. seafood eatery Hook.**

By **Marc Gunther**, Fortune senior writer

NEW YORK (Fortune) -- At Hook, a Washington, D.C., seafood restaurant, there's no Chilean sea bass, bluefin tuna or grouper on the menu. You can't order asparagus in the fall, or strawberries in winter.

But would you like to try the wahoo? Or the sablefish? Or the foot-long tiger shrimp? Or the celeriac-apple slaw?

Running a restaurant is hard. Running a restaurant that serves only sustainably-caught seafood and locally-grown produce, and tries to educate its customers about the plight of the oceans - well, that's an even bigger challenge.

"It can be difficult as a chef to explain to my guests why I don't have many of their favorite fish on the menu," says Barton Seaver, the chef of a D.C. eatery called Hook. "But I will not serve it if it is not sustainable."

What's more, along with the check at Hook comes a surprise - a guide to ocean seafood from the Blue Ocean Institute, a nonprofit group that rates fish species as red (avoid), yellow (be careful) or green (consume), based on their sustainability.

Seaver is a 28-year-old classically-trained chef, one of a small but growing breed of restaurateurs who promote the environment along with the daily specials on their menu. The most famous is Alice Waters of Chez Panisse in Berkeley, Ca. (The capital of the sustainable food movement remains northern California, although foodie-favored cities like Portland, Oregon, and Seattle aren't far behind.)

A nonprofit group called the Chef's Collaborative has more than 1,000 active members, most of them chefs, who say they favor "products we know are better for the environment, our communities and the nation's tables."

Can chefs really help save the planet? "Chefs are the keeper of food culture in America," Seaver says. "People look to chefs to tell them what to eat."



There's some evidence that he's right. Nearly a decade ago, more than 700 U.S. chefs signed a pledge saying they would "Give Swordfish a Break," as part of a campaign led by conservation groups SeaWeb and the Natural Resources Defense Council. Swordfish became unfashionable, the government reduced catch quotas, lawsuits forced the closing of some nursery areas along the U.S. coast, and the stocks recovered, according to the Society for Conservation Biology.

Andy Sharpless, the chief executive of Oceana, an advocacy group dedicated to protecting the oceans, says restaurants like Hook "provide a really useful educational message on behalf of the oceans." But consumer behavior, by itself, can't protect fish stocks from being depleted. "Policy change is essential," he says.

Seaver doesn't disagree. He's planning to testify next month before the National Organic Standards Board, to oppose the idea of allowing farmed salmon - which can have negative environmental impacts - to be labeled as organic. He's active in the Slow Food Movement and works with a variety of NGOs, including Blue Ocean, Oceana and Earth Echo International.

The more, the merrier, Seaver says: "Being completely selfish, I want to see other people selling sustainable seafood. Because there's not going to be any seafood left if they don't." ■

---

 [Digg](#)  [Facebook](#)

---

[More from Marc Gunther: A fight about fish farms](#)

[A future without fish?](#)

**Find this article at:**

[http://money.cnn.com/2007/12/03/news/companies/gunther\\_sustainable\\_fish.fortune/?postversion=2007120314](http://money.cnn.com/2007/12/03/news/companies/gunther_sustainable_fish.fortune/?postversion=2007120314)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© 2007 Cable News Network LP, LLP.