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*HEADLINE:* Seafood Dishes That Are Good For Fish Too Goal Of New Forum

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By Kurt Helin

Editor

The biggest seller on the menu at *King's Fish House* on Pine Avenue for several years was Chilean Sea Bass. That also happens to be a fish whose popularity has led to it being fished to the brink of extinction.

When Aquarium of the Pacific CEO Jerry Schubel told owner Sam King about the Sea Bass' plight, King pulled the fish off the *restaurant's* menu later that day.

"Some of his peers said that this was crazy from a business perspective," Schubel said. "But people just switched to another fish. His business wasn't impacted."

That blend of business and the environment is the goal of a new Sustainable Seafood Forum, which started recently and was officially unveiled last week at the aquarium. Already part of the forum are the Aquarium of the Pacific, *King's Seafood Restaurants* (the largest chain of seafood *restaurants* in Southern California) and Santa Monica Seafood (a supplier to about 1,000 *restaurants* and catering companies in the region).

"We want people to eat seafood in a way that ensures it will be available for future generations," Schubel said.

Partnering with *restaurants* is key, he added, because two-thirds of all seafood is consumed in *restaurants*.

"The forum is setting up guidelines that don't currently exist," said Matt Stein, chief seafood officer from *King's Fish House*.

Those guidelines -- put together by scientists on the SSF's board -- will make sure that seafood served in participating *restaurants* is either from well managed wild stock or from environmentally-friendly farms.

Both of those things have been problems as the world's demand for seafood has grown.

Over fishing has reduced the population of far more than the Chilean Sea Bass (officially called the Patagonian toothfish, the name change was for marketing reasons). Off California, the Pacific Cod used to be plentiful, but now its numbers are noticeably down. A 2002 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates more than 70% of the world's fish species are either fully exploited or depleted.

While raising "farm fish" -- called aquaculture -- can be one way to make fish more available, it also has faced some of the same challenges as raising chickens or hogs. Some of the farms have had overpopulations of fish, which has led to disease and other health issues. Some of these farms, and the waste the fish produce, have been bad for the surrounding environment.

The Sustainable Seafood Forum will set up guidelines about how these farms must operate to meet its standards. That guideline will make it all the way to the menu, and ultimately the plate.

Starting soon, icons will appear on the menu at King's on Pine Avenue and the chain's eight other eateries. There will be a symbol designating which fish are certified from sustainable sources.

What's more, over the next few years the chain will work to check out the sources from which it buys all its seafood. The target is to make sure it is all from sustainable sources by 2009, Stein said.

The timing of this new forum is important, Schubel added, because a recent federal government study said that all Americans should eat fish twice a week to be more healthy. If that came to pass, it would double the amount of fish consumed in the nation, he added.

(top) or (return to home page or downtown page)

*Highlights: LONG BEACH, King's Fish House, restaurant, King's Seafood, Restaurants, restaurants*