



By, Linda Cornish, Executive Direct, Seafood Nutrition Partnership

We all know restaurants sell an estimated 70 percent of seafood consumed in the United States. And it's no secret that consumers, especially Millennials, are increasingly focused on health and wellness, seeking healthy foods that are good for the heart, locally sourced and minimally processed. Now is a great time to feature more seafood as we gear up for National Seafood Month this October.

In fact, a recent survey by Chicago-based foodservice consulting firm [Technomic](#) highlighted that 72 percent of U.S. consumers who increased their seafood purchases over the past two years did so because they are trying to eat more healthfully, and consider seafood to be more healthful.

But, on the whole, U.S. consumers are missing out on the health benefits of seafood. That's the conclusion of two recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) studies that found the amount of seafood being eaten by consumers are inadequate to meet federal dietary guidelines and avoid chronic and preventable diseases. One of those studies found that 80 to 90 percent of U.S. consumers did not meet their seafood recommendations. The other concluded that getting the message of the health benefits of eating seafood to consumers is key, and suggested a public education program was the best way to do so.

That recommendation matches exactly with the education efforts undertaken by the national non-profit Seafood Nutrition Partnership and its mission to educate Americans about the health and nutritional benefits of seafood.

So, how does this cultural shift in health and wellness - leading to new consumer perceptions toward seafood and impacting dining behaviors - translate for chefs and restaurateurs eager to satisfy the seismic change in consumption? How do they learn to make more fish dishes that are both healthy and sustainable, readily available to diners?

For sure, certain fish options can provide a restaurant a distinctive point of differentiation that younger consumers may view as inventive and on-trend, especially when paired with sustainable and local ingredients.

But, many restaurateurs are unsure of how to prepare, or even source, other lesser known, or underutilized fish species, instead stick with the familiar species such as salmon, swordfish and cod. Luckily for restaurateurs in the Northeast, there lies a cornucopia of lesser known, and underutilized, fish species in the Gulf of Maine that can really fit the bill.

Take a look at bluefish, for example. This incredibly tasty fish swims in large schools up and down the East Coast. Bluefish have a strong flavor, due to its high oil content - meaning it's chock full of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Preparing bluefish, whether baked, grilled or sautéed is best when the fish is fresh.

Other healthy, Gulf of Maine fish species receiving nods from restaurants in the New England area include Red Fish, which has a firm, white-fleshed that can handle same cooking preparation as for haddock and similar fish. We learned at the Portland Fish Exchange that there's not a high demand for Red Fish so it is usually sent to the Fulton Fish Market in New York City.

Another great example of an undervalued, local fish is whiting. Also known as silver hake, this flavorful fish is harvested in the Gulf of Maine but is not featured very much on menus in the region. Whiting is extremely popular in Europe, however, where chefs serve up the whole fish baked, as well as preparing the fillets pan-fried and broiled.

Check out these additional resources for information on lesser-known, underutilized fish species to serve on your menu:

- New England Aquarium: <http://www.neaq.org/>
- Gulf of Maine Research Institute: <http://www.gmri.org/>

SNP Executive Director Linda Cornish has held leadership and management positions with Arthur Andersen, Hitachi Business Consulting, Harrah's Entertainment, Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce, and Bill of Rights Institute. She is co-founder and past chairman for the Memphis Farmers Market, has served on the board of Greening Greater Memphis, and taught as an Adjunct Professor at the University of the District of Columbia's School of Business and Public Administration. Linda is a graduate of the University of California at Riverside with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and holds a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Seafood Nutrition Partnership (SNP) is a 501(c)3 whose mission is to inspire a healthier America through partnerships that raise awareness about the essential nutritional benefits of eating seafood. Through its public education efforts, the organization aims to help Americans gain the skills to select, order and prepare fish and shellfish, and to inspire a healthier America by promoting a nutrient-rich diet that includes seafood. SNP is a member of the NCD Roundtable. For more information visit: seafoodnutrition.org.