

## Slow Fish

By Amanda Lopez

Survey on South Coast Seafood Sold and Consumed:

Do you know the fish you are eating?

Are you willing to reduce your salmon consumption?

Would you like to support your local fisherman?

It is now well publicised that the world's fish stocks are in trouble.

Decades of mismanagement and continued overfishing have reduced many species' populations to the brink of extinction. There is hope, however. Consumers, government and the seafood industry are becoming aware of their impact and fishers and farmers are changing their practices in accordance.

Being passionate about Fish, I decided to take a survey of the fish caught and sold on the South Coast of NSW, and compare it to farmed fish and shellfish and come up with a recommendation that works for us and the fish population. Many surprises emerged from this survey and research that I had not expected.

I first researched the fish species most sold and consumed in Australia and especially in the South Coast region; farmed Salmon and farmed Barramundi. It is often a challenge to determine whether more environmental damage is caused by over fishing the wild fish or environmental contamination from consuming farmed seafood.

For farmed fish, Barramundi is much more sustainable than Salmon.

Australian Farmed Barramundi is well managed, has lower risk of disease, consumes less food per kilo sold and does not pollute the sea bed as the cages of Salmon in Tasmania.

Until designs are created to reduce the overcrowding and seabed destruction of farmed Salmon, I would avoid it as much as possible.

My Kiama to Moruya Slow Fish Survey

My South Coast survey went from Kiama to Moruya, I wanted to share my findings with the public and Slow Food in order to encourage more sustainable, fresh and local consumption with the hope of reducing the impact of farmed Salmon and Ocean Trout while adding awareness of best practice seafood consumption.

I am hoping to introduce people to the large variety of locally caught fish, reduce food miles for fish brought from Sydney fish markets or Tasmania and Northern Territory, as well as encourage consumption of fish at the lower end of the food chain.

Our local fish is varied, still quite abundant and delicious.

I was surprised to learn the variety available and the percentage sold directly from the local fishermen rather than all brought from Sydney as previously understood.

Fish shops and markets were also aware of the benefits of selling locally caught fish and were very willing to share their information. Prices certainly varied from market to market but price comparison was not our goal.

Definitely the stand out Fish shop is Nowra Fresh due to its variety, freshness, pricing and willingness to provide information.

As noted below we have a large variety, although catch obviously varies throughout the year and it is time we all took advantage of this abundance.

Some of the locally caught fish we found along the South Coast:

Ocean Bream, Bonito, Butter Fish, Cod, Flake (shark), Dory, Flathead, Latchet, Ling, Ocean Perch, Snapper, Long Fin Tuna, Sand Whiting.

(Long Fin Tuna is listed as endangered so probably best to avoid it.)

Oysters: local only, Greenwell Point, Batemans Bay and Clyde River

Prawns: mostly from Queensland, local fresh water only in summer, a small catch in winter of ocean prawns

Mussels: Eden.

Squid: often locally sold – ask for source

Octopus: very occasionally local – mostly sourced elsewhere.

My conclusion:

Eat local seafood as much as possible.

The lower down the food chain the seafood the better, oysters are great.

Imported NZ better than Asian imports. NZ being a cold water land has a much higher fish catch than Australia, has a well managed fishing industry and is often cheaper than Australian equivalent fish like snapper.

Know where your prawns come from.

Eat less seafood and more vegetables

Don't forget herring, canned salmon, mackerel, sardines (canned and fresh), leather jacket. All healthy for us and healthy for the sea.

I also researched the use of synthetic ASTAXANTHIN versus natural; the food colour added to Salmon meal to have it look like wild Atlantic salmon- otherwise it would be grey/white in colour.

Sifting through many papers of Australian, American and European Research, I was able to conclude that whilst it seems to be safe for human consumption in normal levels it does not have the benefit of natural astaxanthin for free radical elimination and Omega threes.

Wild salmon with natural Astaxanthin from Alaska, is available frozen in Australia, but do we want to add those food miles?

For the best Omega threes in the best ratio for human absorption, my recommendation is HEMP; either in oil or seed format.

Finally: reduce seafood consumption, eat local, eat small fish and molluscs, create dishes that have seafood go a long way like pasta, risotto, curries, etc. Enjoy their flavours in a variety of cooking and eating methods.

To search for local, sustainable fish, you can search the Sustainable Fish website.