



FISH WITH A CONSCIENCE

With the *Ocean Wise Cookbook 2*, I learned even more about sustainable seafood and how to cook with it

Eight years ago, I was invited to a Vancouver restaurant proudly showcasing its sustainable seafood menu. Everything on it was certified as Ocean Wise, a designation developed by the Vancouver Aquarium to help chefs raise awareness about sustainability and to help consumers make the right choices.

It was then I learned that I hadn't always made the right choices myself. In the 1990s, I owned a large film-catering company. We served farmed salmon to film stars and crews, blithely unaware of any sustainability issues. No one complained or questioned where their food came from. In fancy restaurants, I tucked into Chilean sea bass and tiger prawns. You cook and eat what you know.

At that dinner, I got the idea for the first *Ocean Wise Cookbook*, which came out in 2010. Restaurants and chefs across Canada submitted 90 recipes, all for seafood that was certified Ocean Wise. That signifies seafood is caught or farmed responsibly, without damaging the ocean or the ability for the species to reproduce.



The book was a huge learning curve for me. I discovered that frozen can be better than fresh, that many fish farms are sustainable, and that little fishes are delicious. Now I'm launching the *Ocean Wise Cookbook 2*, with more recipes from chefs and new techniques for preparing seafood. You can order it online now and it will be in bookstores by mid-June.

One of the best ways to ensure healthy fish stocks is to eat a wide variety of sustainable seafood

Most Canadians will confess that they're intimidated by seafood and don't know how to cook it properly. Typically, we go out for seafood, which explains why we have so many great seafood restaurants. But one of the best conservation methods is to diversify our diets by eating many kinds of sustainable fish.

"Our best seller is pink salmon. There is plenty of it, but historically it went into cans," says Mike McDermid, the former sustainable seafood program manager for Ocean Wise and now co-owner of The Fish Counter, a Vancouver fishmonger and take-out restaurant.

Local ling cod, sidestripe shrimp, farmed sturgeon and arctic char are also great options, and inexpensive. "Consumer awareness regarding Ocean Wise has increased, but understanding is not fully there yet," adds McDermid. "People still ask for fresh salmon in December when only farmed salmon is available. They ask for ahi tuna rather than albacore. And consumers are scared of frozen."

Cooking fish shouldn't be challenging — if you can fry a piece of bacon, you can fry a fillet of fish. But you can also take it a step further. In the *Ocean Wise Cookbook 2*, you'll find techniques such as sous-vide, smoking and poaching in olive oil. I did my best to give you the instructions you need to master these



BC SPOT PRAWN CEVICHE

This recipe comes from Ned Bell, executive chef at Yew seafood + bar at Vancouver's Four Seasons Hotel. It's my favourite way to eat spot prawns, and it doesn't get much simpler. A tablespoon (15mL) of chili flakes is a good substitute for fresh jalapenos. Serves four.

- 12 B.C. spot prawn tails (3-4 ounces, or 85-115 grams, per person), diced
- 1 cup (250 mL) diced cucumber, skin on, seeds removed
- 1 cup (250 mL) diced yellow bell peppers
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) diced red onion or shallots
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) chopped chives or green onions
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) sea salt (or more to taste)
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) black pepper (or more to taste)
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) diced jalapenos
- Juice of 3 limes (or lemons)
- 3-4 Tbsp (45-60 mL) olive oil
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) full fat coconut milk (optional)
- Crispy wontons, corn chips or crackers

Mix all the ingredients together, except the wontons, chips or crackers. Marinate for 10 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning with sea salt, pepper and lime juice.

To serve, drain the prawns. Serve family style in the middle of the table with wontons, chips or crackers.

techniques and to simplify the recipes so that they aren't too complicated for the home cook.

My new book features 40 species of seafood, from oysters to octopus and from pink salmon to sturgeon. (I also include recipes for seaweed — kelp is the new kale.) I encourage home cooks to check with their local fishmonger to find out what's in season, rather than shopping with a particular fish in mind.



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A good fishmonger like The Fish Counter can help customers become more sustainable by offering seafood we typically don't think about, like mackerel and sardines. Ask questions about where and how the fish was caught or farmed and you'll likely strike up a great conversation. And check out the Ocean Wise website or iPhone app for a regularly updated list of sustainable seafood options.

Besides making the right choices, what else can we do? The next step is to pressure the government to enact traceability regulations and to fund improvement projects for sustainable farms and fisheries. In Europe, fish that is certified as sustainable is clearly labeled and consumers seek it out. We still have a lot of catching up to do.