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VOL. 106, ISSUE 48 • NOVEMBER 30, 2017

ENLIGHTENING LA JOLLA SINCE 1913

ONLINE DAILY AT lajollalight.com

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Kitchen Shrink

CATHARINE L. KAUFMAN Embarking on a culinary journey of seafood sustainability

Discerning foodies and iconic chefs recently rubbed elbows during a lively, packed-as-sardines reception at La Jolla's welcoming The Marine Room to celebrate the bounty of our oceans. Executive Chef Bernard Guillas, captain of the culinary voyage, along with chief mate Chef Ron Oliver launched the third annual Ocean-to-Table luncheon — a pescatarian's paradise as one of the highlights of the San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival.

Guests were treated to fresh seafood from around the world prepared with excitingly creative flavors paired with zesty French wines, and an enlightening educational tutorial. A sustainably-minded crew of local chefs and fishmongers were casting out advice on responsible aquaculture and oceanic stewardship to prevent "watch list" species of fish from extinction so future generations won't be deprived of this essential nutrition.

Sophisticated gourmets first nibbled on artistically plated seafood hors d'oeuvres with sustainably-sourced ingredients, including succulent Nantucket Bay scallops and chunks of Wakame cedar-smoked king salmon swimming in an aromatic milk dashi broth created by Andrew Spurgin from Bespoke Event Styling and Menu Design. Chef Jason

McLeod surprised guests with a layered tower of black cod, quail eggs, pickled shallots and caviar standing on toast points, which he serves at his restaurants Born and Raised, and Ironside Fish & Oyster. In a friendly competition we were regaled with Chefs Brian Malarkey and Shane McIntyre's interesting mound of tender hiramasa (wild yellowtail) with red ogo seaweed and rice pearls marinated in white ponzu (Herb & Wood and Herb & Wood Eatery).

For the sit-down luncheon participating chefs went overboard presenting main courses, such as: wild goose barnacles, mussels and citrus flowers in a sweet broth (Evan Cruz, Marriott, Arterra); melt-in-your-mouth ahi tuna dressed with orange zest, icicle radish, Serrano chili and yuzu banana pudding (Jason Knibb, NINE-TEN Restaurant and Bar); dill pollen dusted diver scallops with buttercup puree and absinthe reduction (Bernard Guillas and Ron Oliver); third course by their prodigy Francesca Rufo presented a sea salt crispy skin Branzino with crab meat, celeriac mousseline and verbena pesto. Finally, for our just desserts a toothsome peach melba upside down cake accessorized with broken meringue, macarons and edible pearls by Maeve Rochford of La Jolla Sugar and Scribe.



COURTESY

Kitchen Shrink Catharine Kaufman with chefs (clockwise from the top) Evan Cruz, Bernard Guillas, Francesca Rufo, Ron Oliver and Jason Knibb

The feast was accompanied by illuminating commentaries from all chefs, and local fishmonger Tommy Gomes from Catalina Offshore Products, who alarmingly informed attendees that 97 percent of fish products are imported into this country, while 85 percent of these are off the FDA inspection grid. Fortunately, "consumers are asking questions about providence of fish and seafood." While locally-sourced seafood is preferred, "it's OK to buy fish with frequent flyer miles for the right reasons." Such as, the exquisite New Zealand salmon used in Andrew Spurgin's chowder that's raised in a glacial river;

industry scrutinized east coast scallops sustainably caught on day boats; and Branzino responsibly farmed in Greece.

According to Spurgin: "We can help our oceans through aquaculture (farm-raised fishing). It's not a new concept since the Chinese have been farming carp for 4,000 years, the Romans oysters."

Chef Guillas believes aquaculture provides a solution to feeding the swelling planet, and preventing depletion of our ocean's resources "as long as it's done right." That includes:

1. Using natural fish feed without poultry or mammalian by-products, and natural food

Apricot Glazed Wild King Salmon

■ **Ingredients:** 1/2 cup shelled pistachios; 1/4-cup sliced almonds; 1 teaspoon Madras curry; 1 tablespoon minced chives; 1 tablespoon white sesame seeds, toasted; 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil; 4 6-ounce wild king salmon fillets; 2 tablespoons apricot jam; 2 teaspoons avocado oil.

■ **Method:** Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Add pistachios, almonds, curry, chives and sesame seeds to food processor. Pulse to chop. Transfer to bowl. Set aside. Add oil to large oven-proof skillet over medium high heat. Season salmon with salt and pepper. Lay in skillet, flesh side down. Sear 2 minutes. Flip. Coat top of salmon with apricot jam. Sprinkle with pistachio mixture. Transfer to oven. Cook 3 minutes or until slightly underdone. Drizzle with avocado oil. Serves 4.



GREGORY BERTOLINI / COURTESY OF THE MARINE ROOM

— Recipe courtesy Executive Chef Bernard Guillas, The Marine Room

grade products like krill, roe and algae to add color;

2. Meticulously maintained pens;
3. Elbow room without crowding;
4. No use of growth hormones, antibiotics or genetically modified species.

“Bottom line: eat big fish seldom, eat small fish often to maintain a sustainable, balanced and safe aquaculture.”

While Chef Restaurateur Malarkey sees aquaculture as the wave of the future, he sounds an alarm, “to know your seafood’s origin and the purveyor, make sure it’s sustainable and ethically harvested, neither

pirated nor endangered.” But he also suggests, “making protein share the spotlight with plant-based foods like grains and greens.”

Chef Knibb follows the ethos of moderation, balance and diversity encouraging pescavores to eat a variety of fish, including the skin and bones of sardines and mackerel for added calcium.

While Chef McLeod believes that eating uncommon “trash fish” like delicious Thresher Shark is the sustainability trend of the future. A diehard locavore, he never uses fish with a carbon fin print.