



Reasons to Celebrate National Seafood Month

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There are a lot of reasons to celebrate in October. This month means anticipating cool(ish) weather and grabbing some beers to catch the weekend football game. [It's also National Seafood Month](#), a time to celebrate the hard-working men and women that bring fresh domestic seafood to the American public.

Seafood impacts everyone, not just those who are on the water catching it. It supports jobs across the country and is an important component to a healthy diet. It's an industry that has been an integral part of American and world history for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Commercial fishing in the U.S. has a unique history and culture that are worth supporting and protecting. So here are a few reasons and ways to celebrate National Seafood Month and support American fishermen.

Americans love seafood.

And why shouldn't we? Between the rich flavors and health benefits, there's a lot to love. [In 2016, Americans ate an average of 14.9 pounds of fish and shellfish per person](#), slightly down from 15.5 pounds per person in 2015, but an increase from 14.2 pounds in 2012. And while we tend to stick to a few more well-known species, like shrimp, tuna, and catfish, U.S. waters provide a diversity of fish and shellfish to enjoy. Americans especially love eating seafood in restaurants. [Close to 70% of seafood in the U.S. is eaten at foodservice establishments](#). We should celebrate our love of seafood by seeking out the diversity of domestic seafood and asking

your fishmonger or server if the seafood you're interested in purchasing was caught in U.S. waters.

Seafood is a multi-billion-dollar industry.

The commercial seafood industry is an economic force in [the U.S. In 2016, the dockside value of U.S. seafood was 5.3 billion dollars](#). From the dock, there are several paths seafood can take. It may be processed, shipped to wholesalers or distributors, then to grocery stores and restaurants that provide it to consumers. Or it could go straight from the dock to a restaurant, or from the dock directly to the consumer. [In 2015, the commercial seafood industry supported 1.2 million American jobs and generated \\$144.2 billion in sales](#) during the journey from ocean to plate. And this reach stretches beyond the coast and into every state in the U.S to bring the American public their access to these public resources.

American seafood is diverse.

American fishermen across our coasts bring a [wide variety of seafood species to the dock](#) (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration manages 230 stocks). While not all these species are for direct human consumption (some fish are used for their oils or for feed), there are plenty to choose from at a grocery store or restaurant. Some of the lesser known species have similar flavor profiles as the more popular, well known ones. Chefs are starting to ask for [“underutilized species”](#) that consumers may not have heard of before to spread awareness about the wealth our fisheries have to offer. So, the next time you're out treating yourself to a seafood dinner, be adventurous. If there's something you are unfamiliar with, ask your server or the chef if it was caught by an American fisherman and give it a try!

Fish stocks are the healthiest they have been in forty years.

When the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act \(MSA\)](#) was passed in 1976, its primary goal was to [“foster long-term biological and economic sustainability of our nation’s marine fisheries.”](#) By establishing a 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone, creating ten national standards that promote sustainable fisheries management, and establishing eight regional councils with representation from stakeholder groups, fisheries that had been overexploited had a path to recovery. [Congress reauthorized MSA in 2007](#) with mandates to use science to manage fish stocks through annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures to end overfishing. According to NOAA, [over 90% of our fish stocks are not subject to overfishing and 85% are not overfished](#). This means that MSA is working, and that current practices can help ensure that there are enough fish now and for generations to come.

Commercial fishermen are fighting to protect their communities and their way of life.

Fishing is more than a business, it's a way of life that fishermen are very proud of. They work hard every day to provide the American public with healthy, sustainable seafood. In order to keep doing that, industry members and the organizations and associations of which they are members are fighting to protect their way of life and are finding innovative ways to make and maintain successful businesses:

- When fishermen aren't on the water, they find time to [travel to D.C.](#) to meet with representatives to talk about the harmful impacts of legislation such as *Increasing*

Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act (H.R.200), and the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2017 (S. 1520).

- Many fishermen have started [working directly with restaurants](#) to educate consumers and law-makers about the importance of the seafood industry.
- The commercial industry is coming together to find ways to help the next generation of fishermen so that this way of life continues its proud history. Initiatives such as the [Young Fishermen's Development Act](#) would provide funding to train and cultivate young men and women who want to make a living on the water.
- [Quota banks](#) provide access to allocation through a central location rather than fishermen having to seek out individuals.

Through collaboration and innovation, we are a stronger industry, and we can ensure fishermen can keep bringing seafood to your plate. You can help, too. I encourage everyone to be more diligent about asking for domestic seafood when purchasing at a restaurant or seafood counter. Thanks to hard-working fishermen around the country, and thanks to the science-based measures that steer our fisheries management, most U.S. stocks are healthy, and Americans around the country can enjoy seafood caught by their own fishermen. [Fishermen are conservationists](#), and we want to make sure that our oceans remain healthy, our way of life can continue, and that you can keep enjoying fish and shellfish from U.S. waters. So, celebrate National Seafood Month this year by thanking a fisherman, taking pride in our management system and leadership status in fisheries, and enjoying some domestic, American seafood.

<http://conservefish.org/2018/10/26/reasons-to-celebrate-national-seafood-month/>

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