



## Some sink, some swim: Well-known restaurants face tough sustainability report cards

By Karen Brooks, *The Oregonian*

January 26, 2010, 5:08PM

**Fish2Fork.com**, a new online restaurant guide focused on seafood and sustainability, found Portland's **Bamboo Sushi** to be the most sustainable of 50 restaurants reviewed across the country so far. The site was founded by Charles Clover, the British journalist-author whose outspoken book, "The End of the Line," argues that overfishing is helping destroy entire ocean ecosystems.

The site's reviews are just as hard-hitting as Clover's book, harpooning some of the country's best-known restaurants for what it considers lax or reckless seafood choices.

Scores are based on the sustainability of the fish offered on a restaurant's menu, as well as its sourcing policies, using guidelines from the **Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch** and the **Marine Conservation Society**.

Restaurants are graded on a five-fish scale. The range runs from 1 to 5 Blue Fish (1 being "acceptable" and 5 "best of class") to 1 to 5 Red Fish (1 means "not trying hard enough" and 5 means "a complete disregard for our planet and its fish stocks").

Bamboo Sushi was considered the country's first "certified" sustainable sushi restaurant when 26-year-old Kristofor Lofgren opened in November 2008 as a small but stylish spot in Southeast Portland.

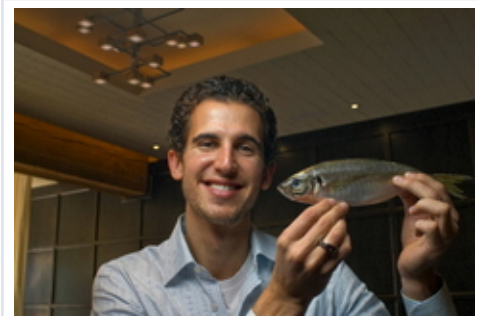
The web site awarded Bamboo Sushi a rating of 4.5 Blue Fish, writing "The restaurant subscribes to our view that seafood can be described as good only if it is sustainably produced. Bamboo Sushi is a beacon of hope and offers a template for every restaurant that wants to become sustainable."

**Ray's Boathouse**, a longtime signature of Seattle's scene, also received a positive score of 4 Blue Fish.

But the site slapped a 5 Red Fish rating on the Boston branch of **McCormick & Schmick's Seafood Restaurant**, the Portland landmark business and one of the country's best-known seafood chains.

"They always say where the fish comes from," says the review. "But there is a distinct lack of any detail about sustainability. The restaurant sponsors **seafoodhealth.com**, which points out that Atlantic cod stocks have been greatly depleted. And yet there on the menu is Atlantic cod in seasoned bread crumbs for \$26.95. Maybe it's farmed but we doubt it. Likewise there is ahi tuna, mahi mahi, swordfish and even shark on the menu. Do all these come from sustainably caught stocks? As if there were any, in the case of sharks."

"We understand that sustainability is of critical importance to our core product offering of fresh seafood," says McCormick and Schmick's CEO Bill Freeman. "We are continually striving to improve our sustainability practices in all areas of our business."



The Oregonian

Kristofor Lofgren's Bamboo Sushi lands high rating on fish2fork.com

Meanwhile, **The French Laundry** -- the landmark foodie temple in Napa Valley owned by celebrity chef Thomas Keller -- received a mere 0.5 Blue Fish. Notes the review: "It has glittering credentials and a nine-course tasting menu will set you back \$240 but no clear statement on sustainability or information that is part of a "boat to plate" traceability scheme. There isn't a large amount of fish on the menu but it is disappointing to see monkfish when stocks are declining and it is a Seafood Watch 'fish to avoid.' (This) is a poor score for a fabulous restaurant which, judging from (Keller's) presence at Seafood Watch events, clearly aspires to be sustainable."

Bamboo Sushi's Lofgren says he's excited about the recognition on the site, though sustainability is only one part of his goal. The restaurant has received good reviews, including from The Oregonian, for innovative sushi and Japanese cooking.

"Our focus now is to see if we can create an entirely Japanese menu but source all of our produce and ingredients from the Pacific Northwest," says Lofgren. "So far, it is going very well. We now have our own Albacore boat and we are getting a salmon boat this spring. We are very much looking forward to pushing the envelope in 2010."

-- **Karen Brooks**

© 2010 OregonLive.com. All rights reserved.