



Subsistence Caught Wild Sockeye Salmon with
Caesar Salad and Roasted Cauliflower

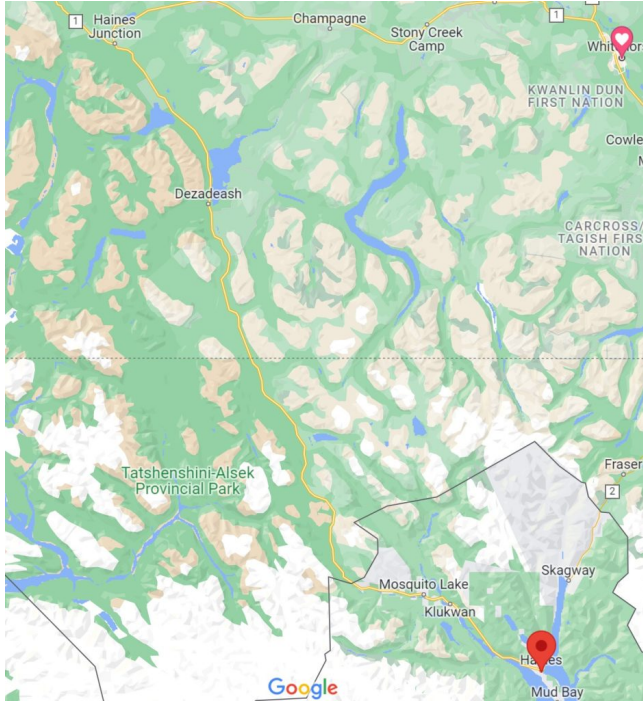
Seeking Local Alaskan Food: Mariculture Options for Food Security

Description



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Alaska food security means different things to people in various regions of Alaska. When this writer lived in Southeast Alaska my freezer was filled every summer with fish and deer, but I was not so keen on spending a lot of time foraging for berries. In speaking recently with a food security advocate who lives at the end of the Haines Highway,[1] I discovered some other angles on the food security paradigm.



Haines is 755 glorious miles from Anchorage.

A trained chef, graduated from **Culinary Institute of America** in 1985, **Brenda Josephson** has spent most of her career in accounting and business management. Recently she returned to college to take an on-line **Food Business Leadership** program at her alma mater—motivated by an interest in learning new ways to address food sustainability and food security in Alaska.



She is particularly interested in **Mariculture**—a specialized branch of agriculture involving the cultivation of marine organisms for food.

The State of Alaska, Department of Fish & Game Division of Mariculture is actively working on developing a sustainable mariculture industry in Alaska. Partnering with the Division of Mariculture to promote healthy eating with Alaska harvested mariculture foods can effectively meet the State's goals to grow a sustainable mariculture industry while also promoting a change to more healthy eating options for residents. This partnership has the benefit of using funding set aside to promote mariculture with recipes and dietary trends that are Mediterranean diet based with the addition of mariculture plants and animal foods provides an opportunity for a positive health intervention.



I believe we can achieve greater food security by doing some things differently, explained Josephson. The government has a role in messaging, but I do not believe this issue can be solved by the government and I do not support the government buying stock piles of foods, sending money to nonprofits to grow gardens, or any other of the boondoggles I have heard promoted to spend public resources in the name of food security.

A press release from the **Alaska Division of Agriculture** in early 2021 explained that the 2018 federal **Farm Bill** authorized the **State of Alaska** to issue micro-grants to support innovative ways to improve Alaska's food security. The division began accepting scoping applications for three-year grants of up to \$15,000 for individuals, or \$30,000 for qualified organizations. The **U.S. Division of Agriculture** was set to provide \$1.8 million to the division in each of the program's first two years.[2]

You mean federal pass-through mini grants aren't enough?

I'm going to be critical here about these grants to nonprofits; it's not sustainable. It's not going to bring food sustainability for us, said Josephson. I ask: What's the end game when you no longer fund that nonprofit? When they don't get the money one year will there be a garden that year? I don't see this as being long term sustainable, because when the grant money runs out, they're going to stop growing the gardens when they're not being paid to do it. So that's why I really think changing people's desires for regional foods is more realistic—finding naturally available foods.

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One organization Josephson does favor is the **Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc.** AFDf's mission is to identify common opportunities in the Alaska seafood industry and to develop efficient, sustainable outcomes that provide benefits to the economy, environment and communities.

Toward this end AFDF funds research in the categories of bycatch reduction, byproduct development, 100% utilization, (fishing) gear modifications, energy efficiency, and mariculture development. One of AFDF's objectives is to share the valuable information produced through its work with interested parties. [3]



Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc.
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During the mid-1990s I wrote for a Seattle publication called *Fishermen's News* which was started by the powerful commercial fishermen's organization, *United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA)*. That publication is today owned by a *Maritime Publishing* in San Diego, CA.[4] One story I wrote in March, 1994 was about an innovative bycatch-free trawl designed by a Juneau fisherman who was getting the run-around everybody still gets from the *Alaska Department of Fish & Game*. [5]

Scallop fisherman says ADFG dragging down his bycatch-free trawl

by Donn Liston

So far, the reward for an innovative bycatch-free scallop trawl design has been bureaucratic hurdles and lost fishing time for a lifelong Southeast Alaska fisherman whose once legal gear is now considered experimental, after he gained U.S. and Canadian patents for it.

Instead of the heavy weight necessary for traditional New Bedford dredge trawls, currently in common usage for scallop harvest, 57-year-old Ken Kirkman's "Seafood Harvester" design uses an aerodynamic dive plane to put a metal A-frame drag on the bottom, where he says a rake scratches three inches into the surface, picking up mostly large scallops and sweeping them into 7-8 inch web that balloons behind like a vacuum cleaner bag.

Like most serious commercial fishermen, Kirkman is a jack of all trades. He is certified as a diver, welder, and licensed electrician, and he carves silver and ivory.

"It slides along like greased snot," explained Kirkman, describing the invention he had great success with during the mid-1980s. "But when that New Bedford comes along, with 4,000-5,000 pounds of weight and steel rings and webbing digging and pounding the ocean floor with each wave on the surface, it is the difference between sweeping your coat over the top of a scallop and dragging a heavy chain over it."

Working as a cook on boats pulling New Bedford tows, Kirkman roamed from point to point studying the accepted trawl method before designing his trawl.

Kirkman did the patent research in Anchorage and received official Patent Number 5,024,009. He returned to Juneau last year, in an attempt to get "eye-to-eye" with fish managers in hopes they might see the advantage of his design.

The apparent result of one successful 1992 demonstration of his invention behind Douglas Island has been that he and his crew of two other "true believers" have had to watch as bigger boats fish without observers, and he is limited by weather, equipment breakdowns, and short-term ADFG permits, from proving up on his claims.

"We had an ADFG biologist on board and did two one-hour tows," he explained. "On the first drag we put 10 Tanner crab and three king crab back into the water alive, and the second drag we returned 12 Tanner crab and two king crab alive. If that's a heavy bycatch I'll kiss his ass and give him 20 minutes to draw a crowd!"

Kirkman's cousin, Frank White, is retired from police work in various Southeast Alaska communities, culminating with five years as chief of police in Kake. He explained his participation this way: "I came here in August and I've been doing

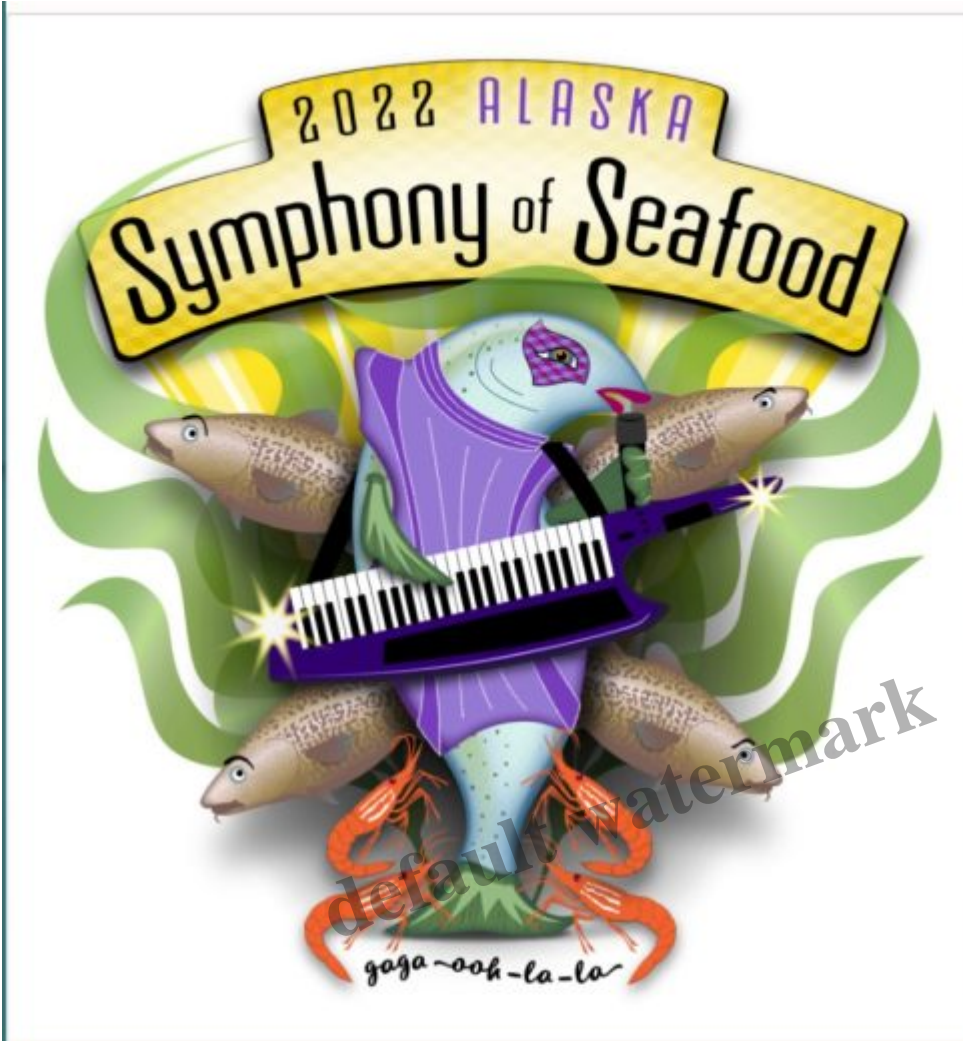
Ken Kirkman has had a load of trouble getting ADFG to endorse what he says is a bycatch-free scallop trawl he invented.

Donn Liston photo

this because I believe in it. Even though I didn't make a dime this year, just sticking it out with him has been important—but we've benefited by ADFG's... together with other mechanical problems the opportunity was not realized. "I originally wanted to set up this scallop..."

Alaskans in Southeast are also familiar with efforts to promote Alaska seafood through the *Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI)*, a public-private partnership intended to foster economic development for the mostly Outside-based commercial fishing industry.[6] ASMI provides seafood recipes for preparation of seafood delicacies from Alaska waters.[7]

Similarly, AFDF sponsors the *Alaska Symphony of Seafood* contest in Juneau, where our elected officials are often treated to spectacular seafood "receptions" sponsored by commercial fishing interests, which I have myself enjoyed immensely.



AFDF Announces Symphony of Seafood

The Alaska Fisheries Development Fund (AFDF) is proud to announce the winners of the 2022 Alaska Symphony of Seafood contest. The contest, which was held in Alaska on February 10-11, 2022, received 18 entries from across the state. The Alaska State Legislature has designated commercial fishing as a key industry, and industry representatives and attendees gathered in Anchorage to celebrate the winners. This event is a highlight of the Fishermen of Alaska's annual convention.

The Symphony is an annual contest for new value-added products made from Alaska seafood. The goal of the Alaska Symphony of Seafood is to increase the value of Alaska seafood by encouraging product development which diversifies markets, utilizes more fish, and reduces fish waste. This year, two new categories were added, Salmon and Crab. A new award, Bristol Bay Choice, in cooperation with the Symphony's marketing partner, the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association (BBRSDA).

But make no mistake about it, our Alaska seafood bounty is owned by west coast producers who send boats from Washington, Oregon and California to scoop up fish and crab of all varieties for world markets. So, the idea of having an Alaska natural food contest might have some appeal among those who truly want to promote food security for Alaskans. Most of the commercial fleet couldn't care less if Alaskans live or die.

Josephson offers some recipes to begin the discussion!



Kelp Dungeness Crab Soup:

- 2 cups Dungeness crab meat
- 4 cups of water
- 2 cups ground bull kelp stipe
- ½ tsp red miso paste
- ½ tsp asafetida spice
- ¾ cup dried King Bolete mushrooms

Combine and simmer, season to taste.

Supply and demand rule.

We are tied to Seattle in other ways, too: *Initially, I thought maybe I could do hydroponics commercially, Josephson continued, I considered purchasing a hydroponic trailer. But when I did the market research, I found out that everyone thinks it's a great idea, but they are not going to pay more than what they pay for barged produce. I settled on purchasing a small hydroponic unit with the intention to sell herbs here in Haines.*



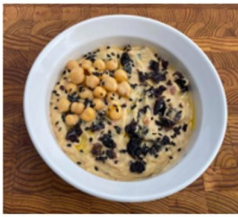
Microgreen Salad with Tomatoes and Cucumbers with Quinoa Seed Cheese

So, what we're really talking about, is getting people to change old eating habits to adopt new ideas of the kinds of foods that they'd like to eat, said Josephson, not because they have to do it—because they're told this is not sustainable—but because they choose to for the enjoyable flavors. As a cook I have learned to enjoy the flavors and textures when I experience the fresh regional foods.



Sauteed Chantarelle Mushrooms with Wilted Kale and Balsamic Vinaigrette

There's a couple of weeks in the spring that I'm pretty excited to get fiddlehead ferns and they are available even up in the Anchorage area.



Kelp Dips – Served with fresh vegetables:
Kelp salsa and sour cream
Kelp salsa and hummus and siracha sauce
Garnish with olive oil, black sesame seeds, and garbanzos beans.

Eating natural foods is part of the Southeast Alaska culture. This writer had students bring dried smelt to eat like candy in my class when I taught 6th grade in Haines, 2006-07. **Fiddlehead Restaurant and Bakery** in Juneau is a popular establishment celebrating healthy natural foods, too.

Kelp farming is becoming a new niche of the food production paradigm.[8]

In Southeast Alaska, in the wet meridian temperate zone, we have a lot of fungi and a lot of berries. Southcentral has a lot of edible plants also, said Josephson. We need to consider what are we uniquely situated for in our local area rather than a morphing other agricultural foods that don't grow well here. For instance, corn can't grow here because we don't have enough warmth, but we do have productive gardens from our abundant light. So, we can grow spinach and lettuces love our climate. Sometimes peas do well, sometimes they don't. Alaska has barley. We have done it with some crops. We are importing chicken food and food for cattle—can we grow that? Will we ever get the land needed to grass feed cattle for a beef industry?

Tribal affiliations can also be effective partners. Tribal elders have an affinity to the foods of their youth and would be an important source of information on traditional recipes. Elders are respected in their communities and may be able to influence younger members to embrace healthy food options of traditional foods. Tribal governments have effective communication systems with tribal members that is a resource for communicating recipes and photos of mariculture foods.



Josephson has written about Alaska food security issues.

Josephson continued: *There's a lot of nutrition that we're just looking past, because our food system has been so industrialized, and we concentrate on the industrialized food regime to provide for us instead of what is available naturally regionally. We must rethink what are we eating and why? What can we eat that is available here in Alaska?*



Kelp Salsa:

- 8 cups ground bull kelp
- 4 green peppers
- 3 onions
- 4 cups celery
- 4 oz green chiles
- 10 Roma tomatoes
- ½ tsp red chili pepper
- 6 tsp cumin
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro
- 2 tsp red chili pepper flakes
- 2 tbs honey
- 3 medium jalapeno peppers
- 2 cups white vinegar

Combine all ingredients together.

What about our Alaska supply-chain issue?

We read about supply chain issues in the news every day, continued Josephson. I'm concerned about that, my family raises chickens, and we have plenty of eggs. Sometimes we give eggs to other people in exchange for donation toward feed. And there's been times where we were the resource in the town for some because there are no eggs in the grocery store. I have pictures of it; no dairy and no eggs on the grocery shelves. And this is in 2022, that this is happening, said Josephson. If you're starting to see empty shelves at the grocery store, I think it's the beginning of it, not the end of it. When you don't have dairy and you don't have eggs it doesn't mean you're going hungry. It just means you have to make different choices. I think that's where we're at now in Alaska; we have a lot of resources available to us, but it might not be what we've been used to.



Kippered Wild Alaskan Sockeye Salmon

Dear Reader: Are you hungry now?

References:

[1]Haines Highway from Haines Junction to Haines

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Haines,+AK+99827/@60.0650573,-136.5984911,8z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x54001f972851b98d:0xb4f19a60eafd118e!8m2!3d59.2351471!4d-135.447332?hl=en>

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[3]Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation

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[4]Fishermen's News; *The Advocate for the Commercial Fisherman*

[5]Feeding Alaskans; Man vs ADFG Machine

[Feeding Alaskans; Man vs ADFG Machine](#)

[6]Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute

<https://www.alaskaseafood.org/about-asmi/>

[7]ASME Seafood Recipes:

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[8]Kelp Farming in Alaska

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ketchikan+kelp+farming&docid=607986826155136299%20%20&>



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