

Subsistence Caught Wild Sockeye Salmon with Caesar Salad and Roasted Cauliflower

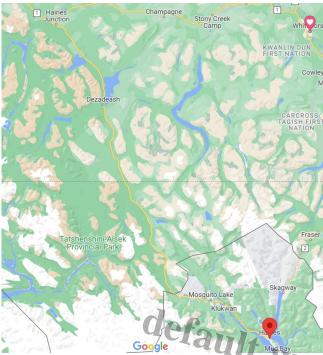
Seeking Local Alaskan Food: Mariculture Options for Food Security

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 materâ??motivated by an interest in learning new ways to address food sustainability and food security in Alaska.



She is particularly interested in Maricultureâ??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 Alaskaâ??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 programâ??s first two years.[2]

You mean federal pass-through mini grants arenâ??t enough?

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

Rock and Ice Climbing on Ruth Glacier through May! Kahiltna Base Camp dropoff for West Buttriess climb of Denali May-June--or a flight-seeing adventure hosted by true Alaskans!



One organization Josephson does favor is the *Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc. AFDFâ??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 AFDFâ??s objectives is to share the valuable information produced through its work with interested parties. [3]

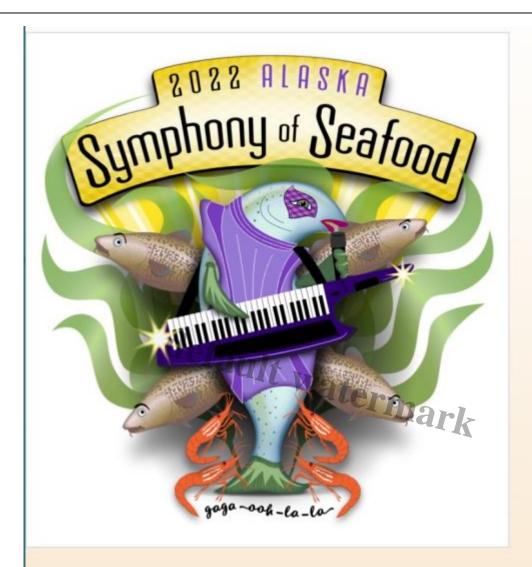


During the mid-1990s I wrote for a Seattle publication called *Fishermenâ??s News* which was started by the powerful commercial fishermenâ??s organization, *United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA)*. That publication is today owned by a *Maritime Publishing* in San Diego, CA.[4] One story I wrote in March, 1994 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]



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, AFDE sponsors the *Alaska Symphony of Seafood* contest in Juneau, where our elected officials are often treated to spectacular seafood a??receptionsa?• sponsored by commercial fishing interests, which I have myself enjoyed immensely.



AFDF Announces Symphony of Sea

The Alaska Fisheric is proud to annound Alaska Symphony Alaska on February received 18 entries Alaska State Legis commercial fishing industry representate attendees gathered winners. This even Fishermen of Alaska

The Symphony is an annual contest for new value-added products made goal of the Alaska Symphony of Seafood is to increase the value of Alaska encouraging product development which diversifies markets, utilizes markets reduces fish waste. This year, two new categories were added, Salmor new award, Bristol Bay Choice, in cooperation with the Symphony's materials and 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 couldnâ??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
- 1/2 tsp red miso paste
- 1/2 tsp asafetida spice
- 3/4 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 itâ??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.*

Waterm



Microgreen Salad with Tomatoes and Cucumbers with Quinoa Seed Cheese

So, what weâ??re really talking about, is getting people to change old eating habits to adopt new ideas of the kinds of foods that theyâ??d like to eat, said Josephson, not because they have to do itâ??because theyâ??re told this is not sustainableâ??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

Thereâ??s a couple of weeks in the spring that lâ??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 donâ??t grow well

here. For instance, corn canâ??t grow here because we donâ??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 donâ??t. Alaska has barley. We have done it with some crops. We are importing chicken food and food for cattleâ??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: Thereâ??s a lot of nutrition that weâ??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. *lâ??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 thereâ??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 youâ??re starting to see empty shelves at the grocery store, I think itâ??s the beginning of it, not the end of it. When you donâ??t have dairy and you donâ??t have eggs it doesnâ??t mean youâ??re going hungry. It just means you have to make different choices. I think thatâ??s where weâ??re at now in Alaska; we have a lot of resources available to us, but it might not be what weâ??ve been used to.





Kippered Wild Alaskan Sockeye Salmon

Dear Reader: Are you hungry now?

References:

[1] Haines Highway from Haines Junction to Haines

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[3] Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation

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[4]Fishermenâ??s News; The Advocate for the Commercial Fisherman

[5]Feeding Alaskans; Man vs ADFG Machine

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[7]ASME Seafood Recipes:

https://www.alaskaseafood.org/recipes/

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