Making Seafood Selections For Health and Sustainability

With more recommendations encouraging seafood intake for health benefits, it is also important to take sustainability and environmental contaminants into consideration. What seafood is sustainable? Do the health risks outweigh the benefits? The controversy of eating farm-raised vs. wild-caught fish is complex and it can be easy to get lost in a sea of conflicting information. Let's dive in to explore the pros and cons of consuming certain seafood so you can make informed decisions to benefit your health and the environment.

Seafood for Heart Health
From a nutritional standpoint, seafood is an excellent, heart-healthy protein option. The American Heart Association and USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend consuming seafood twice a week. Seafood is high in B vitamins, vitamin D, selenium and omega-3 fatty acids, and runs low in saturated fat (the kind that can raise blood cholesterol). Heart-healthy omega-3’s can lower triglycerides, reduce risk of blood clots, lower blood pressure, reduce inflammation and decrease risk of stroke.

Wild Caught vs. Farm Raised
It is a common misconception that wild seafood is good and farm-raised is bad. Unfortunately, the answer is not black and white. What's the difference? Simply put, wild-caught seafood is caught from a natural habitat (lake, ocean, river) whereas farmed seafood is raised in large tanks. In the store or on your plate, the two could look the same, but are not promised to be equivalent.

Nutrition: The nutrition quality of the seafood largely depends on what the fish eats. Fish in the wild eat a natural diet and tend to be slightly lower in saturated fat than farm-raised varieties. Farmed fish can be slightly higher in omega-3 fatty acids, presumably due to the farms’ fortified feed.

Contaminants: Some studies have shown how farm-raised varieties can be higher in contaminants. Additionally, farm-raised fish tend to have a higher instance of disease due to farming conditions. It is important to note that mercury can be found in both farm-raised and wild-caught seafood due to industrial pollution that finds its way into lakes, rivers and oceans. Large predatory fish have the most mercury. It is recommended that pregnant women and children avoid fish with the potential for the highest level of mercury (shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish).

Sustainability: Some wild-caught fish is considered unsustainable, and some farm-raised varieties are considered environmentally restorative, so the answer is “it depends on the fish”. See next page.

Cost: Wild-caught seafood is typically higher in price than farm-raised options. Frozen or canned wild-caught seafood can be more budget friendly than fresh varieties.
Where in the World is Your Seafood From?

*Does the quality of seafood differ depending on location?* In short, yes. Seafood from other countries is not guaranteed to be as regulated as it is in the United States. High antibiotic use in imported, farm-raised fish is common. Many international fish farms are not held to high inspection standards that you would see in the United States. Additionally, some overseas seafood sources—both wild-caught and farm-raised—are known to be higher in contaminants.

*How do you know where your seafood has been sourced from?* To check the origins, you can look at the Country of Origin Labeling (COOL), which is required on all seafood sold in the United States. Keep in mind that frozen seafood will have two labels: one to specify where the product was packaged and one that indicates where the seafood was caught or farmed. This can be deceptive, as seafood can be packaged in the United States (so it appears to be a U.S. product), but is actually a product of a different country.

How to Know if Seafood is Sustainable?

Sustainable seafood has become a hot topic in the past decade due to concerns of overfishing and habitat-damaging fishing practices. For seafood to be characterized as sustainable, many factors are considered including chemical use, type of feed given to the fish if it is farmed-raised, environmental impact, fishing methods, and current population of the fish. Farm-raised and wild-caught varieties can be sustainable OR unsustainable.

Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch is one of the most well-known and reputable resources for understanding seafood sustainability and provides consumer guides based on country and region. The Seafood Watch app provides an easy way to determine sustainable options when shopping. The app includes a search option so you can enter the name of the seafood, select if it is sourced domestically or imported, and whether it is farmed or wild caught. Some sustainable options include salmon (U.S. and New Zealand), trout (U.S. farmed) and Pacific cod (U.S.). Check out the consumer guides from Seafood Watch.

It is also important to consider sustainable options when eating at restaurants. You can ask your server if the restaurant serves sustainable seafood. There are certified sustainable restaurants in Colorado including Jax Fish House!

To Seafood or Not to Seafood?

Weighing pros and cons of sustainability, contaminant exposure and nutrition can make seafood selection feel overwhelming. The World Health Organization found that for the majority of commercial wild- and farm-raised species, the health benefits of seafood consumption outweigh the risks of contaminant exposure. In other words, the health benefits gained from eating seafood—wild-caught or farm-raised—lends a health opportunity that outweighs the risks of not eating any seafood. That being said, it is recommended to make sustainable choices when possible.
**Tempeh Bolognese**

Try this hearty sauce served over rice, spaghetti, spaghetti squash, or zoodles.

Serving Size: 1/2 cup  
Yield: 8 servings

**Ingredients:**
- 8 ounces tempeh, broken into chunks
- 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 cups cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 2 1/4 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 6 ounces canned tomato paste
- 1 cup low-sodium vegetable broth
- 28 ounce canned crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 cup flat-leaf (Italian) parsley, chopped or 3 tablespoons dried parsley
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, chopped
- Salt and pepper

**Directions:**
1. In a food processor with a metal blade, pulse tempeh to a texture similar to ground beef.
2. In a large saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add tempeh, and cook, stirring often, until lightly browned, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the garlic, onion, carrots, mushrooms, dried basil, oregano, and salt and pepper to taste. Cover and cook, stirring often, for 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste, cook, stirring often, for 1 minute. Add broth and cook, stirring often, for 5 minutes.
4. Add tomatoes and simmer, uncovered, over medium-low heat, for 20 minutes. Stir in parsley and fresh basil. Enjoy over pasta, rice, potatoes, or squash.

**Nutrition Information / Amount per serving:**

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<td>Calories</td>
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Upcoming KRNC Programs and Events

**Spots are going fast! Cinco De Mayo Cooking Class**
Join us for a culinary celebration of Cinco de Mayo **Friday, May 4th 6-8 pm**! Bring a friend, colleague or that special someone to a fun, interactive evening of cooking with Mexican food favorites bursting with authentic flavors. Featured recipes include Chili Lime Tortilla Chips with Homemade Salsa; Mango, Avocado and Black Bean Salad; Chicken Street Tacos; and Baked Churros. 100% Blue Agave Tequila will be supplied by our sponsor, **NoCo Distillery**! Location: Gifford Building Room 237 on the CSU campus (502 W. Lake St.) Cost: $75 per couple/pair
Spots are going fast! Click [here](#) to register!

**Registration still open! Diabetes Prevention Program**
Learn the behaviors and information you need to stop prediabetes from becoming diabetes. Our successful **year-long** program includes a master’s-level certified lifestyle coach, social support, weight loss support, comprehensive curriculum and fun hands-on activities. Class started March 26th, but it’s not too late to sign up. **Registration closes April 16th.**

Call today to register for the program! (970) 495-5916

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Between all the mixed messages we receive about nutrition, eating healthy can seem like a real challenge. That’s why our registered dietitian nutritionists are here to provide you with a personalized nutrition plan tailored to you and your goals.

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Click [here](#) to schedule an appointment online.