

Major food service switches to sustainable fish

Each issue we check in with a noted restaurateur to discover what's on their wild catch shopping lists. Today, we meet Chris Ivens-Brown of the Compass Group.*

English-born Chris Ivens-Brown is spearheading a new initiative by Compass Group, the world's largest food service company, to use only sustainably sourced seafood, a policy that was implemented last March. This policy will impact approximately 1 million pounds of fish and follows the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch, which advises as to the best seafood to use and what to avoid.

Why did Compass choose to move to sustainable seafood?

Being a global leader, we can make a huge impact on fisheries. It's also a business decision because we want to be able to continue to provide fish.

Which wild fish do you use, and which do you use more frequently?

The first fish we did were pollock and tilapia in July. Next will be salmon when it comes into season in the spring. The two biggest are striped wild bass and salmon, followed by John Dory and trout.

What kinds of problems do you encounter with wild fish, e.g., seasonal availability?

Chef Ivens-Brown

Has fed famous people such as Phil Collins, Martha Stewart, and Queen Elizabeth.

Backed by Compass Group, spearheaded efforts to host Charlotte, N.C.'s first culinary festival during Charlotte Shout 2002, which draws culinary giants such as Wolfgang Puck and Anthony Bourdain.

Has aired two successful seasons of *At Home with Chef Chris*, a zesty cooking television show with a celebrity guest line-up.

Is an inaugural candidate for the Distinguished Visiting Chef program at Johnson & Wales University, to be launched this spring.

The seasons only make a difference on certain species. Wild salmon is the biggest one. We're working with some frozen seafood houses, but I'll try to stick to seasonal sustainable products as diligently as I can. We also attempt to minimize promotions of out-of-season items by reducing their visibility on menus.

Is the price a drawback? What do you expect to see over the next few years?

We really expect the shift [to sustainable fish] to be cost-neutral. But it's three-fold with effective menu management, training of our associates, and the education of our clients. If the industry follows suit, which we expect it to, the



Chef Chris Ivens-Brown, vice president of culinary development for Compass Group, the Americas.

prices should stabilize in the long term.

What is the most important thing you look for when purchasing wild fish?

The first thing is where is it from; secondly, how was it fished; and finally, color, odor, texture, as with all fresh fish, as well as the gills, eyes, and slime on the skin. But from a sustainability standpoint, you have to put the first and second points first.

How important is it to you to know where your fish came from, how it was raised, caught, etc.?

We need to educate our clients, and we need to help them help us. We also need to educate people on smaller species such as mackerel and wild herring, so we can generate more awareness.

** Fishers/suppliers/distributors: If you have a product that meets Chef Ivens-Brown's specifications, he wants to hear from you – but not directly, please. He won't have time to listen to your pitch. UNLESS ... you fill out a pitch list form found on our web site: www.wildcatchmagazine.com.*

Download it, fill it out, and send it as an attachment to editor@wildcatchmagazine.com or to Editor, Wild Catch magazine, 1710 S. Norman St., Seattle, Wash., 98144. We'll then submit your ideas to the chef when he has time to contemplate them. Again, please don't contact him directly. If you do, the chances are slim that you'll make the sale. Instead, fill out the pitch list. We'll take it from there. Of course, this service is free to Wild Catch subscribers.