

Chef Michael Weaver is Ocean Wise

by Patricia Noonan



Chef Michael Weaver at Lure

I haven't been to British Columbia for almost twenty years and lots of things change. What doesn't change is the need to eat and in any good restaurant worth their sea salt, the chefs should be in the loop on the latest producers and suppliers. For seafood, you would think it's a no brainer. Vancouver and Victoria are both maritime cities, but the problem of overfishing and unsafe fishery practices persist. 'Unwise' products still make it to the table, but that's all on the road to change, thanks to a new program called [Ocean Wise](#), developed by the Vancouver Aquarium. The program is committed to ensuring that ocean resources are harvested and consumed in a sustainable manner and works with local restaurants to help them identify sustainable seafood options for their menus. At these restaurants, patrons can choose seafood menu items which have the Ocean Wise logo beside them.

[Lure Seafood Restaurant and Bar](#), in the Delta Ocean Pointe Resort and Spa, overlooks Victoria Harbour and is striking at any time of day. The light filled room with floor to ceiling windows and modern clean lines is equally dramatic at night when the lights are low. With an alluring 'Lure' Martini in hand, I choose my food and wine as locally as possible. The salty cured salmon roulade stuffed with a sweet Dungeness crab mix makes the grade with a glass of award winning Tinhorn Creek Gewurztraminer. The Cowichan Valley Duck Breast presented is, to my mind, a twist on the idea of cassoulet. The duck breast arrives, lounging on the most decadent bed of pancetta flavoured white beans. The sour sweet cherry and rhubarb compote begs for a pinot noir, but the fleshy duck and beans, for a syrah. My server offers me tasters and I end up with the Mt Boucherie Syrah, dense with peppery, berry

flavour. I probably should have dessert and a local port style wine, but I have a digestif of armagnac after my dinner date with BC cuisine.

The next day I return in the morning to meet with **Chef Michael Weaver** for breakfast. Over coffee, Chef talks shop and chats about the biz out west. I can't decide what to have so Michael suggest his specialty, the most intimidating yet delicious West Coast inspired French Toast. A veritable Rocky Mountain quartet arrives with pecans and dried cranberries, bananas, sultana raisins and a spiced creme Anglais. Michael shares how the menu of Lure continues to evolve with his equally passionate team in the kitchen. I ask about the Ocean Wise program, as I notice the logos throughout the menu.



"All but one of my seafood options on the menu are Ocean Wise. We have switched about five or six items to Ocean Wise approved producers. Some are not local as I was saying, as even British Columbia has some work to do to get their fisheries programs in order," Weaver says, over bites of his Eggs Benedict." Once I found out more about some of the seafood farm practices, I made the changes for all the right reasons." Chef Weaver uses almost a dozen local producers as his day to day suppliers.

Queen Charlotte Islands supply wild salmon for the menu at Lure. Any seafood that is deemed ecologically sound will sport the Ocean Wise logo below. (The Cured Wild Salmon is on the lunch and dinner menus, along with numerous other choices and there's a spa menu as well.)

Later, I spoke with **Mike McDermid**, the Ocean Wise Coordinator, and he told me that they do not solicit restaurants to become a part of this program. "They need to be dedicated enough to the idea of sustainable seafood to find out about us and get in contact with us," Mike tells me. "To be rated an Ocean Wise recommended option, all of these criteria must be met," McDermid explained, listing them:

1. The species is abundant and resilient to fishing pressure;
2. A strong management plan based on current scientific information exists for the fishery in question;
3. The species is harvested in such a way as to limit any bycatch (incidental/accidental catch of unintended species); and
4. The species is harvested in such a way as to limit any habitat damage or negative animal interactions

Seafood products to watch out for on BC menus are Sablefish, Skeena or Fraser River pink salmon, Kagan Bay scallops, albacore tuna and Dungeness crab. If you go to the Ocean Wise website at the Vancouver Aquarium

<http://www.vanaqua.org/conservation/oceanwise/>, you can find out which restaurants across the province of British Columbia are supporting this program.



After graduating from York University, Patricia Noonan has spent two decades working in the hospitality industry, which has included earning an advanced certificate (with distinction) from the Wine & Spirit Education Trust and teaching at The School of Hospitality, George Brown College. In addition, Patricia has contributed to many publications and regularly writes about spirits at the popular wine site [**Vintage Assessments**](#).