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## **Ocean Wise**

British Columbia is known for its fresh, high-quality seafood. As you probably know, fish is a high-protein, low-fat food that provides a range of health benefits.

White-fleshed fish, in particular, is lower in fat than any other source of animal protein and oilier fish like salmon contain large quantities of omega-3s, or what is known as the "good" fats. In addition, fish does not contain the "bad" fats found in red meat, called omega-6 fatty acids.

Omega-3 fatty acids can help maintain cardiovascular health. They are also important for prenatal and postnatal neurological development and may reduce or alleviate rheumatoid arthritis, irregular heartbeat, depression and irritable bowel syndrome.

So, now that you know the health benefits of eating seafood, you should also know that some seafood choices are environmentally unfriendly. Knowing which seafood dishes don't cause harm can be a challenge.

There is, however, a program called Ocean Wise, which allows diners to confidently identify and choose restaurants that provide environmentally responsible seafood menu items.

The program also provides restaurants with the information and support to continuously improve menus from an environmental sustainability perspective.

This innovative conservation program is a collaboration between Vancouver restaurants and the Vancouver Aquarium. It is dedicated to raising the awareness of sustainable seafood options for consumers.

The program also works with local chefs and restaurant owners to reduce the number of non-sustainable seafood items on their menus.

Sustainable seafood can be defined as a species that is abundant and resilient to fishing pressures; well managed with a comprehensive management plan; harvested in a method that ensures limited bycatch; and harvested in a way that limits habitat destruction.

Restaurants become Ocean Wise by completing an initial menu assessment, removing one unsustainable item from their menu and promoting at least one sustainable menu item with the Ocean Wise logo. Restaurants commit to removing one additional unsustainable seafood choice from their menu every six months until none of the listed species are offered. Sustainable seafood menu choices are identified with the Ocean Wise logo.

Environmental issues concerning seafood are:

Over-fishing - removing too many fish from the sea and not leaving enough to re-populate themselves in time for the next catch;

Bycatch -- removing animals from the ocean that were not intended to be part of the catch, such as sea turtles, dolphins, seabirds and sponges;

Habitat degradation - fishing or producing seafood in areas that affect the quality of water, reefs and other ocean habitats that then negatively impacts sea life.

The Boathouse Restaurant in Horseshoe Bay, The Salmon House Restaurant, The Cactus Club in North and West Vancouver and both the Observatory and Altitudes restaurants on Grouse Mountain are all participating in the Ocean Wise program.

So when dining on the North Shore, look for the Ocean Wise symbol on the restaurant menu and do your part in protecting the ocean.