

Syracuse University Food Services Offers Fresh Fish Fridays

In response to requests to bring more fresh fish to the table, Syracuse University Food Services has partnered with Red's Best to offer delicious, sustainable fish.

Red's Best was founded in 2008 by Jaren Auerbach. Auerbach is a businessman, but a fisherman at heart. Before starting the company, Auerbach held positions in every aspect of the fishing supply chain including three years as a commercial fisherman in Alaska and New England. He created Red's Best with the goal of supporting small fishing boats by finding markets for their daily catch, their whole catch, not just the most popular species.

Jamey Lionette, Director of Sustainable Seafood Program for Red's Best explains that they work with approximately 1,000 fisherman located from Boston to New Bedford, MA. Red's Best employees assist in unloading the fisherman's daily catch, preparing it for sale, and finding buyers. "This eliminates the traditional middlemen and ensures fresh fish for Red's Best customers. The fishermen can concentrate on what they do best - fish, while Red's Best helps them make a living out of it, and the customer is rewarded with a regular flow of fresh catch." said Lionette.

This business model has made a positive change in the fishing industry.

- The fishermen have a guaranteed, sustaining wage.
- Under-utilized fish are caught and brought to market, maintaining diversity in the ocean that is critical



for sustainability. This means that the fishing is driven by what is available, not market driven. Customers still receive fresh, delicious fish and without over fishing.

- This has created a shift in the fishing industry to a supply driven industry based on what is abundant in the water at any given time. It is an ideal way to reduce over-fishing.
- Lionette explains, "It also generates excitement in the industry, based on what is being caught and the different gear the fishermen use to catch the fish. Fish is one of the last wild resources we have for food. We can't necessarily determine what the fishermen will catch at any given time, so this framework is ideal for both the customer and fishermen."

Red's Best has also created traceability software that enables all the catches to be tracked using QR (Quick Response) codes. When scanned, it gives you information about the fish, how it was caught, and the fisherman who caught it. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) uses this to track the fishermen and the fish being caught. The QR code information lets us know what fish we will be cooking. Our customers appreciate knowing this more about the fish they are being served.

Syracuse University Food Services began working with Red's Best in spring 2016, serving it for several dinners to see how the students responded to the idea of fresh fish. Once it was determined that program would be successful, the menu committee set out to make a regular plan to serve the fish.

Here is how it works:

- Food Services menu committee decided to serve the fresh fish on Fridays alternating between lunch and dinner each week so students would have more opportunities to eat a meal with the fresh fish.
- Red's Best and SU Food Services agreed to the variety of species that will be included in the program. The fish chosen are: Haddock, Pollack, Hake, and Cod.

- This program includes a single price per pound regardless of the variety of fish used. This fall, Food Services has been purchasing 300lbs a week.
- Eight standard recipes were created for the fresh fish recognizing that a number of traditional cooking methods could be applied to any of the specified fish. The recipes were entered into our food management system so they are readily available.
- Fish is delivered to the Food Services commissary on Wednesday and is immediately shipped to each of the five dining centers. The QR code on the boxes is scanned for marketing purposes.
- Thursday, dining center cooks do any advanced preparation; the fish is served on Friday.
- Information about the fish served is promoted on social media and is highlighted in the dining centers and food courts.

The program has been so successful that Schine Dining has begun serving the fish at lunch on Friday and Goldstein Dining serves it at dinner on Friday. Food Services is excited about this growing partnership with Red's Best.