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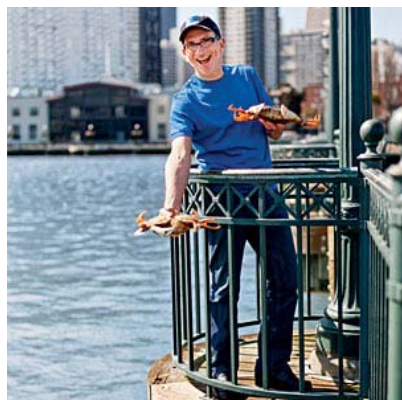
Eco-Inspiration

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Coastal Hero: We Salute...Rick Moonen

The executive chef of RM Seafood in Las Vegas and energetic spokesperson for sustainable fishing around the globe tells us why we should be smart about what we serve.

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CL: Food critics sang your praises long before you became an advocate of sustainable fishing. Why get involved?

RM: When I lived in New York, I went to fish markets regularly and noticed that swordfish were getting smaller and smaller. Instead of the 200-pound varieties, they were selling pucks—fish that haven't reached sexual maturity—because adults were so hard to find.

CL: You confronted this issue head-on, first by taking popular items such as Chilean sea bass off your menu. Are people ever hesitant to try dishes they don't recognize?

RM: When a common variety like wild salmon isn't in season, I replace it with a similar one that is. A lot of people haven't heard of Arctic char, but it's environmentally conscious and has a pink color and thickness like salmon. I serve it grilled with a smoky salt

and horseradish cream sauce on a cucumber salad. Its sustainability story sells, too!

CL: Speaking of stories, you require your staff at RM Seafood to view instructional DVDs from the Monterey Bay Aquarium and to memorize sustainable seafood fact cards. Why?

RM: Many restaurant-goers aren't aware of overfishing. We show customers that sustainability not only tastes great but also has an educational value.

CL: How can diners find out which fish are environmentally safe to eat if they're not dining at RM Seafood?

RM: Carry the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch card with you, or download the Seafood Watch application on your iPhone. Blue Ocean Institute even has a number you can text to find out the present status of a certain fish.

CL: What are the top three nonendangered fish you recommend?

RM: Tilapia, black cod, and Arctic char

CL: How important is it for chefs to spread the word?

RM: It's important, but it's the 35- to 55-year-olds guiding this movement. Their generation has enough personal experience to realize the situation and have the motivation to do something about it.

ALSO: Try Rick's sustainable seafood recipes

Writer Sarah Latta