



By Jennifer Bain
Food Editor

These are perilous times for fish and the people who love them.

Eating both wild and farmed fish is now a complicated act. It isn't enough to carry a wallet-sized card that tells you whether a particular species gets a red, yellow or green light.

In *Four Fish: The Future of the Last Wild Food*, American journalist Paul Greenberg delves into the history of the fish that dominate our menus: salmon, tuna, cod and sea bass.

We caught up with the avid angler by phone Tuesday from Seattle. Here's an edited version of the conversation.



Paul Greenberg is a lifelong angler who writes extensively on seafood and the oceans.

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Q: Let's start from a consumer's point of view. You suggest that the phase in which consumers educate and edify themselves by choosing "good" fish over "bad" fish to save the oceans must end. Why?

A: It's not that they shouldn't continue to choose good and bad fish, it's that we shouldn't be fooled into thinking that just because we've chosen right, we've all saved the

sea. The real game changers are not going to be on the consumer level, but on the wholesale level. They're the ones who really drive demand.

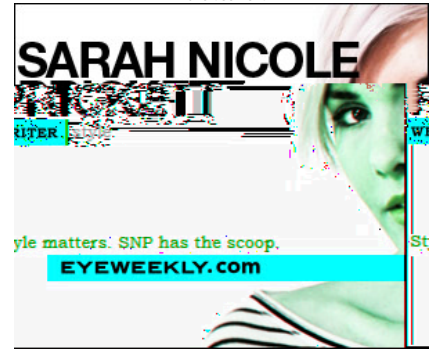
Q: So is there any point in carrying seafood safety cards, like the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Pocket Guides or Canada's Seafood Guide by SeaChoice.

A: We shouldn't throw them out. These cards came about for public education purposes and helped people to understand bad fishing practices and bad agriculture practices. From a moral standpoint, I think it's good to choose correctly, but if you're someone who eats a lot of fish, you ought to consider getting involved on a political level. My problem with the seafood card is that it has the potential to sap enthusiasm. I think what's needed is honest-to-god confrontation, particularly among young people.

Q: Four is a powerful number when it comes to food. You explain that we mainly eat four mammals (cows, pigs, sheep and goats) and four birds (chickens, ducks, turkeys and geese). How does this connect to your choice of four fish?

A: I sold this book as a proposal that was initially called *The Fish on Your Plate*. But there was this power of four — white and flaky fish (cod), white and meaty fish (sea bass), pink and succulent fish (salmon), and steaky fish (for sushi). It was an orchestra and it reduced itself down to a quartet on the menu. Two of these four fish, salmon and sea bass, are aquacultured. Cod and tuna are still mostly wild. So the question is: Can that menu item be an ecologically sound choice? Does it have to result in overfishing and poor aquaculture practices?

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heavily subsidized fishing fleets that don't employ many people, and a move toward artisanal fishermen-herders who will "steward the species." It also means higher market prices.

2. The conversion of significant portions of ocean ecosystems to no-catch areas. Key fish breeding grounds and nursery habitat must be reserved as safe havens for overexploited fish populations.

3. The global protection of unmanageable species. This is about species that straddle multiple nations or live in international waters. Certain species, like the Atlantic bluefin tuna, should be elevated to untouchable status like tigers, lions and whales.

4. The protection of the bottom of the food chain. Small forage fish (like anchovies, sardines and herring) are being used to feed fish farms and animals like pigs and chickens. Some of them, and their habitats, must be protected.

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