



Chum salmon gaining favor (fish radio)

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [Fish Radio with Laine Welch]

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This is Fish Radio. I'm Laine Welch... Chum salmon are a rising star for Alaska. I'll tell you more after this -

Did you know that over 80% of Alaska's seafood is harvested in federal waters, meaning from three to 200 miles offshore? These resources contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to Alaska's coastal communities and statewide economy every year. There's more to Alaska's seafood economy than you can see from town. Learn more at www.marineconservationalliance.org

If you're in the seafood business and want high definition video footage of Alaska and its fisheries, contact the Alaska Seafood marketing institute and ask about their new HD library. Check it out at www.alaskaseafood.org

Not long ago, Alaska chum salmon literally went to the dogs.

'Six or seven years ago we were paying a five cents a pound for pale or dark chums and really having a tough time finding markets for all the chums we bought. There was roe stripping and the fish was thrown away. Now there is value in every fish that is caught, all the way to the last, greenest fish that we pull out of the bays. '

Dave Ohmer is manager of Trident Seafoods in Petersburg. Chums have been Southeast's most valuable salmon for three of the past five years, and the region provides half of Alaska's total chum catch, mostly from hatcheries. Prices to fishermen there are 70-75 cents a pound. Returns, however, are way down this summer. At Hidden Falls hatchery, a major producer in the northern Panhandle, only 20 percent of the expected run of two million fish has returned. Steve Reifentstahl is manager of the Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association -

'It's unfortunate in a year when pink forecast is low and not looking like it's going to be off what the dept. is forecasting. We really needed a big chum run at Hidden Falls, at least as big as the forecast and it looks like that's not going to happen. It's terribly unfortunate. '

Traditionally, chum salmon were valued by Asian customers for their roe. More recently, chums have become popular as a less expensive alternative to sockeyes, coho or kings. And they are being featured as a 'center of the plate' salmon entrée at restaurant chains throughout the U.S, says Laura Fleming of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

'Suppliers are now offering customers skinless boneless portions in many different weights and that gives us entrée into markets like the various restaurant chains like Sizzler. '

The Cadillac of all chum salmon comes from the Yukon River, where fishermen are fetching 70 cents a pound, up 20 cents. That's averaging out to \$700 per opener. With closures for king salmon, it's all about Yukon chums, says Jack Schultheis, manager of Kwik'Pak Fisheries.

'We've been very fortunate with our chums and it's been really well received in the market and we're concentrating on it. '

Schultheis says Yukon is a powerful brand -

'Thank goodness we have that word Yukon ð of all the rivers to be on we're really fortunate ð and then on top of that to be able to say that we have the most nutritious salmon known. '

Omega 3 oil levels in Yukon chums are up to four times higher than any fish listed in the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture data base.
Thanks to the assist from APRN.

Fish Radio is also brought to you by Ocean Beauty Seafoods ð serving Alaska's fishing communities since 1910. On the web at www.oceanbeauty.com .. In Kodiak, I'm Laine Welch.

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