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MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM

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## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# ‘SEAFOOD WATCH’ HELPS CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES PROTECT OCEAN WILDLIFE THROUGH SEAFOOD CHOICES

It was once thought that the ocean’s supply of seafood could never be exhausted. Today, an ever-increasing demand for seafood is putting our oceans under severe pressure worldwide. The Monterey Bay Aquarium’s *Seafood Watch* program works to broaden awareness of the links between the seafood on our plates and the health of our oceans as it helps consumers and businesses choose seafood that supports environmentally responsible fishing and fish farming practices. It’s a buying decision that can contribute directly to ocean health.

“Fisheries conservation is one of the most important marine conservation issues today,” says aquarium Executive Director Julie Packard. “It’s an environmental problem whose solution is in people’s hands every time they buy seafood. Through *Seafood Watch*, we want to give people the information they need to make wise choices when they shop.”

Since its debut in 1999, the *Seafood Watch* program has grown to include six regional pocket guides, with three Spanish-language options, featuring popular seafood found in different regions of the United States. [Pocket guides are updated every six months to reflect ongoing research, ranking seafood as “Best Choices”, “Good Alternatives” or “Avoid”.](#)

In partnership with zoos, aquariums and other institutions across the U.S., the Monterey Bay Aquarium has put over 32 million *Seafood Watch* pocket guides in the hands of consumers; over nine million guides were included in the 2007 DVD release of the Academy Award-winning animated film *Happy Feet*. Thousands of guides are printed each year from the website [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org). A mobile version of the pocket guide is also available for cell phones or other mobile devices with Internet connection, in addition to a free iPhone application “Seafood Guide.”

In 1997, an aquarium special exhibition *Fishing for Solutions* prompted an internal review of the aquarium’s own seafood-buying practices, resulting in a list of recommendations for internal use. Visitors began asking for a copy of this list and the *Seafood Watch* pocket guide was born.

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## SEAFOOD WATCH – MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM – Page 2

Seafood Watch offers online resources and practical tools for consumers, seafood buyers and *Seafood Watch* partners. An annual two-day event, *Cooking for Solutions* connects individual buying decisions to the health of the oceans and the soil, with celebrity chefs showcasing dishes featuring sustainable, organic and local food and wine options.

Through the efforts of Monterey Bay Aquarium's *Seafood Watch* program and the broader sustainable seafood movement, major seafood buyers are embracing the move to sustainable sourcing; this includes Bon Appétit Management Company the aquarium's own food service provider (serving over 80 million meals per year in 400-plus cafés at corporate, university and institutional clients nationwide). Consumer demand, together with a growing understanding of the urgent issues facing the oceans, is encouraging other seafood buyers to seek more ocean-friendly alternatives. The aquarium continues to develop a network of *Seafood Watch* partners and to work closely with seafood businesses to create market incentives for a switch to sustainable seafood.

Increased consumer demand for seafood and the growth of destructive fishing and aquaculture practices have had a profound effect on the health of our oceans. Today nearly 70 percent of the world's fisheries are considered either fished to capacity or overfished. It's also estimated that up to one-fourth of the global catch is discarded to die as unwanted bycatch: undersized and juvenile fish, endangered sharks, sea turtles, seabirds and marine mammals.

With the worldwide catch in decline, aquaculture or fish farming seeks to fill the gap between supply and demand. In 2006, 47% of all seafood sold was farmed, and this number looks set to increase and will soon exceed wild-capture.

"Fish are the only wildlife on our planet still actively hunted as a major food source, and aquaculture is rapidly expanding as many of these fish are declining," notes Mike Sutton, director of the aquarium's *Seafood Watch* program. While fish farming can help ease pressure on wild fisheries, aquaculture methods can have their own negative impact. One major concern is the amount of wild-caught fish required to feed carnivorous species of farmed fish, such as salmon and tuna. This puts added pressure on populations of small fish, critically important in the marine food web, and as a source of protein in developing countries.

The mission of the Monterey Bay Aquarium is to inspire conservation of the oceans.

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**Editors: Images of *Seafood Watch* pocket guides and of many seafood species listed on the pocket guides are available through the Monterey Bay Aquarium's online pressroom at [www.montereybayaquarium.org](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org).**

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# MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM

## SEAFOOD WATCH PROGRAM Fact Sheet

The Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program empowers seafood consumers and businesses to make choices for healthy oceans. The program works to transform seafood markets in ways that create incentives for sustainable fishing and fish-farming practices. Key elements of the program include public education efforts to raise consumer awareness about sustainable seafood issues, primarily through distribution of Seafood Watch pocket guides; and outreach efforts with retailers, restaurateurs and other seafood purveyors to encourage them to make the switch to sustainable seafood.

### **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

In 1997, the Monterey Bay Aquarium opened its "Fishing for Solutions" special exhibition to inform visitors about conservation issues surrounding fishing and aquaculture practices. In the course of developing the exhibit about the environmental threats from non-sustainable practices, the aquarium evaluated the seafood it was serving through its own restaurant and catering services, and to its exhibit animals. The aquarium made a commitment to serve only seafood from environmentally responsible sources. Low-key publicizing of the change prompted visitors to ask for copies of the aquarium's approved seafood list. From this modest beginning, the Seafood Watch program was born. In 1999, with the launch of a new and expanded aquarium website [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org), this information metamorphosed into the first Seafood Watch consumer pocket guide.

In 2001, Seafood Watch was awarded a grant of more than \$2 million from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to significantly expand the program. Subsequent grants from the Packard and Annenberg foundations have supported the evolving Sustainable Seafood Initiative as it works to shift the buying habits of consumers and businesses to support sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

The Seafood Watch pocket guide lists ocean-friendly seafood choices for consumers in a green "Best Choices" column, and non-sustainable choices in a red "Avoid" column. Those in the "Avoid" column come from sources that are overfished, or are caught or farmed in ways that harm the environment. There is also a yellow "Good Alternatives" list; these seafood items are an acceptable option, but there is concern with how they're caught or farmed. Pocket guides are updated every six months to incorporate the latest available research. A full downloadable scientific report is available on the website. The Seafood Watch website attracts thousands of visitors each year, to download pocket guides and use the online resources to make ocean-friendly choices.

Our new “Seafood Guide” iPhone application brings the latest Seafood Watch recommendations directly to your iPhone or iPod touch [www.montereybayaquarium.org/iphoneapp](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/iphoneapp). Mobile pocket guides are also available for cell phones or other mobile devices with Internet connection by logging on to [mobile.seafoodwatch.org](http://mobile.seafoodwatch.org)

To date, the Aquarium and its Seafood Watch partner organizations have distributed more than 32 million pocket guides. There are six regional guides (West Coast, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Central U.S. and Hawaii), plus three Spanish-language guides. Nine million pocket guides were distributed in the 2007 DVD release of the Academy Award-winning animated film, Happy Feet. A national sushi guide was launched in October 2008 featuring the most popular sushi items found in the U.S., listed by their Japanese sushi names.

## **PURVEYOR OUTREACH**

Increasingly, the Seafood Watch program focuses on efforts to change the buying habits of seafood purveyors: restaurants, food services providers and wholesalers. These businesses are the “gatekeepers” to the seafood supply in the United States. Restaurants alone account for approximately 70 percent (by dollar value) of all seafood sold nationwide.

Online, the Seafood Watch website ([www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org)) offers resources that purveyors can use to understand sustainable seafood issues and train their staff to discuss the complexities of sustainable seafood with their customers. Seafood Watch offers fact sheets and downloadable research reports. In addition it has developed a training package to aid purveyors as they move to incorporate sustainable seafood onto their menus and at their seafood counters. The Seafood Watch Training Program is available as a two-disc DVD set, with portions available online.

Since 2002, the aquarium and Seafood Watch have hosted an annual Cooking for Solutions event, which brings together celebrity chefs from across the United States and beyond to prepare gourmet dishes using sustainable seafood and organic ingredients, paired with organic and sustainable wines. These events—which reach several thousand consumers annually as well as top food journalists and food industry leaders—strengthen the connection between the foods people eat and the health of the oceans and the land. Notable chef participants have included Alice Waters, Jacques Pépin, Diana Kennedy, Martin Yan, Rick Bayless, Nora Pouillon, Rick Moonen, Barton Seaver, and more than three dozen other renowned chefs.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium works with food service providers like Bon Appétit Management Company, Compass Group North America and ARAMARK as they shift their menus and buying toward sustainable seafood and establish themselves as leaders in the transformation of the food service industry. Bon Appétit, the Aquarium’s own in-house food service provider delivers 80 million meals per year in over 400 cafés in 29 states.

Seafood Watch partners with local restaurants in the Monterey Bay region to promote ocean-friendly seafood menus, and provides tools to train wait staff to understand the issues and communicate sustainable seafood messages with restaurant patrons. Through the aquarium’s membership in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Seafood Watch brings the sustainable seafood message to tens of millions of zoo and aquarium visitors nationwide.

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## RESTAURANTS PARTNER WITH AQUARIUM TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

The Monterey Bay Aquarium's *Seafood Watch* program has partnered with restaurants from the Monterey Bay area to help transform the seafood market in ways that protect ocean wildlife and preserve critical ocean habitats.

Over 40 establishments have joined the *Seafood Watch* "Restaurant Partner" program, pledging to drop from their menus all red-list species in the "Avoid" category of the aquarium's *Seafood Watch* pocket guide. They also commit to continue to work with the aquarium and to train their staff to answer customer questions about ocean-friendly seafood.

The roster of partners also includes restaurants that have been part of the aquarium's annual *Cooking for Solutions* events, an annual two-day gourmet celebration featuring celebrity chefs, sustainable seafood, organic cuisine and sustainable/organic premium wines. *Cooking for Solutions* 2009 took place May 15 and 16. Chef Thomas Keller, of The French Laundry was this year's honoree for his strong commitment to food sustainability; Celebrity Chef Ambassador Alton Brown was also honored as Educator of the Year.

"It's great that so many restaurants want to do their part for healthy oceans by making wise seafood choices," said Sheila Bowman, outreach manager for *Seafood Watch*. "Taking 'red-list' items off the menu and telling customers about what they're doing really makes a big difference."

The full – and growing – list of restaurant partners, as well as additional background about the *Seafood Watch* program, is available at [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org).

The mission of the Monterey Bay Aquarium is to inspire conservation of the oceans. More information about all aquarium programs is online at [www.montereybayaquarium.org](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org).

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 11, 2009

## THOMAS KELLER, ALTON BROWN WILL BE TOP HONOREES AT ‘COOKING FOR SOLUTIONS 2009’

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*Great chefs, culinary gala, tours put spotlight on sustainable cuisine*

Renowned chefs from across North America, including The French Laundry’s Thomas Keller and *Food Network* all-star Alton Brown will share their passion for fine dining and environmentally sustainable living when they’re honored at the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s “Cooking for Solutions 2009” on May 15-16, 2009.

“Cooking for Solutions 2009” At the two-day celebration, celebrity chefs – selected and recognized by the Monterey Bay Aquarium for their leadership in promoting food practices that protect the health of the ocean and the soil – will create gourmet dishes, host food and wine adventures, and offer cooking demonstrations that feature sustainable seafood and organic ingredients.

All proceeds support the nonprofit aquarium’s Seafood Watch program, which has worked for the past decade to transform the seafood market in ways that preserve healthy ecosystems and sustain ocean wildlife.

Title sponsors of “Cooking for Solutions 2009” are Bon Appétit Management Company, an award-winning food service company recognized internationally as a leader in promoting sustainable cuisine; and *Coastal Living*, a national magazine that celebrates life along the coast and serves as the source of inspiration and information for people who live or dream of living a coastal lifestyle.

“Cooking for Solutions 2009” is part of the aquarium’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Monterey Bay Aquarium opened on October 20, 1984 with a mission to inspire conservation of the oceans.

Thomas Keller, chef/owner of The French Laundry in Yountville, California and one of the most respected and honored chefs in the United States, will receive the **Conservation Leadership Award – Chef of the Year** at the eighth annual “Cooking for Solutions” celebration.

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## COOKING FOR SOLUTIONS 2009 – Monterey Bay Aquarium – Page 2

A leading advocate of sustainable seafood and building menus around local, organic ingredients, he'll be honored along with **Educator of the Year** Alton Brown – chef, author and host of *Food Network's Good Eats* program, and a lead commentator and judge on *Iron Chef America*. Thirteen other noted chefs from across the United States and Canada will also receive honors.

Eight culinary greats will be recognized as **Celebrity Chef Ambassadors**: Nate Appleman (A16 and SPQR, San Francisco), Floyd Cardoz (Tabla, New York City), Regina Charboneau (Twin Oaks, Natchez, Mississippi), Xavier DeShayes (Ronald Reagan Building, Washington, DC), Joyce Goldstein (chef, food writer, consultant, San Francisco), Alexandra Guarnaschelli (Butter, New York), Paul Rogalski (Rouge, Calgary, Alberta) and Frank Stitt (Bottega, Birmingham, Alabama).

They'll be joined by four renowned chefs who return as **Special Guest Celebrity Chefs**: John Ash (cookbook author and teacher, Santa Rosa), Sam Choy (Sam Choy's Big Aloha Brewery, Sam Choy's Breakfast, Lunch & Crab, all Honolulu, Hawaii; and Sam Choy's, Guam, USA), Jim Dodge (Bon Appétit Management Company, Palo Alto) and Michel Nischan (The Dressing Room and Wholesome Wave Foundation, Fairfield, Connecticut). All have been recognized in past years as Celebrity Chef Ambassadors.

Also attending as a **Special Guest Celebrity Chef** will be Tracy Griffith (Sushi American Style, Los Angeles) – one of America's first female sushi chefs and the author of *Sushi American Style*, who acquired her love of sushi through her half-sister, actress Melanie Griffith.

The Friday gala on May 15 – the signature celebration at “Cooking for Solutions” and a sell-out event every year – offers gourmet dishes from appetizers to desserts, created by the celebrity chefs, their local host chefs and 60 exceptional regional restaurants. In addition, 55 premium vintners from California and the western U.S. will pour organic and sustainable wines.

The gala will be preceded by a wine and hors d'oeuvres reception with Alton Brown. Thomas Keller will sign his cookbooks during the gala, and will host a deluxe food and wine adventure on Saturday, May 16 along with winemaker Jim Fetzer and Monterey Bay Aquarium Executive Director Julie Packard.

Saturday's lineup of Food and Wine Adventures includes culinary outings with other “Cooking for Solutions” chefs. Several chefs will also present morning cooking demonstrations at the aquarium, featuring sustainable seafood and other ingredients.

Saturday evening brings the fourth Sustainable Seafood Challenge, an “Iron Chef”-like event

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## COOKING FOR SOLUTIONS 2009 – Monterey Bay Aquarium – Page 3

in which four “Cooking for Solutions” chefs prepare tasty seafood dishes from the same sustainable ingredients in a tournament-style kitchen set-up. Sam Choy and Alton Brown will provide lively commentary, and will serve on the judging panel that recognizes the chefs in four fun categories.

The aquarium’s Seafood Watch program, which inspired creation of “Cooking for Solutions,” gives consumers, retailers and restaurateurs the tools and information they need to make seafood choices that help assure a future with abundant ocean wildlife.

Seafood Watch creates regional and national pocket guides to sustainable seafood that consumers can use to guide their seafood buying decisions at the restaurant or market – including a new consumer guide to sustainable sushi that debuted last fall.

Since 1999, Seafood Watch has distributed 27 million pocket guides, all featuring seafood items popular in different regions of the United States. It also partners with zoos, aquarium, conservation organizations, retailers, restaurateurs and seafood purveyors to shift the seafood market in directions that reward fishing practices that protect ocean ecosystems and the marine animals that depend on them.

Seafood Watch recommendations are also available for the iPhone and iPod touch, and for internet-enabled mobile devices.

Tickets for “Cooking for Solutions 2009” are available by calling the Monterey Bay Aquarium toll-free at 866-963-9645.

More details about “Cooking for Solutions 2009” are available online at [www.cookingforsolutions.org](http://www.cookingforsolutions.org). You can request event brochures by sending an email to [events@mbayaq.org](mailto:events@mbayaq.org).

In 2009, the nonprofit Monterey Bay Aquarium celebrates 25 years of inspiring ocean conservation. To learn more, visit [www.montereybayaquarium.org](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org).

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**Editors: See program details and chef bios below. Public Relations can provide photos of Thomas Keller, Alton Brown and other chefs, and photos/video of past “Cooking for Solutions” events.**

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## AQUARIUM ISSUES SPANISH-LANGUAGE SEAFOOD GUIDES

Spanish-speaking consumers now have a tool to help them protect ocean wildlife every time they order seafood at restaurants and seafood markets: Spanish-language pocket guides to ocean-friendly seafood, created by the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

The Spanish-language guides are modeled on three of the pocket guides issued by the aquarium's *Seafood Watch* program. Costa Oeste Guía de Mariscos features over 60 of the most popular seafood species found on menus and in markets on the U.S. West Coast. Each item is ranked "Las Mejores Opciones" (Best Choices), "Buenas Alternativas" (Good Alternatives) or "Evite" (Avoid) based on research by the *Seafood Watch* team. A guide is also available for the Southwest (Sudoeste Guía de Mariscos), and Guía Nacional de Mariscos is based on the National pocket guide.

"We wanted to empower the Hispanic community," said Sheila Bowman, *Seafood Watch* outreach manager. "The guides are a great way for families to make a difference for the oceans."

Bowman noted that in a 2003 statewide survey, the Public Policy Institute of California found that Hispanic residents were more concerned about many of the environmental problems affecting the coast than non-Hispanic Californians. One significant finding: between 32 and 46 percent of Hispanic voters say that overfishing is a big problem for the state.

The aquarium has already distributed more than 500,000 Spanish-language pocket guides, both in the aquarium and through partner organizations. These guides can also be printed from the *Seafood Watch* website [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org) or viewed on a cell phone or other mobile device with Internet connection.

*Seafood Watch* produced the Spanish-language West Coast guide in collaboration with staff at the Fishwife and Turtle Bay Taqueria restaurants on the Monterey Peninsula. Restaurant owners Julio and Marie Ramirez – and their bilingual staff – helped to create the new guide.

"Our staff was honored to contribute to the Spanish-language guide," said Marie Ramirez. "This is a great tool for our staff to share with our Spanish-speaking customers, who in turn can take it home and share it with their families and friends."

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