



Slow Food[®] in Canada

WILD SALMON MANIFESTO

Slow Food Canada encourages only the seasonal consumption of wild salmon on the West Coast, discourages the consumption of any form of farmed salmon including "organic" farmed salmon, and is committed to the restoration of wild salmon stocks.

In Atlantic Canada, factors such as over-harvesting, depletion of traditional feed sources, government mismanagement and habitat destruction have brought many wild salmon stocks to the edge of extinction. These threats are greatly magnified through the homogenization of wild gene pools as a result of mass escapes of farmed salmon that erode genetic diversity. Almost all of the wild stocks in the Atlantic provinces are seriously threatened and should not be eaten. In the Pacific, where many stocks are much healthier, although some have declined dramatically in the last 100 years, we have witnessed that salmon farming does not take pressure off wild fish, but only brings about a market adjustment in supply-and-demand economies that further endanger wild stocks by undercutting prices and lowering the standard of living of coastal fishermen or eliminating the economies altogether.

We believe that wild salmon is a cultural and ecological keystone species whose importance cannot be overstated within its native range and therefore we must make every effort to protect and restore these fisheries before we repeat the tragedy of our East Coast cod fisheries. The wild salmon is a deeply embedded expression of our culinary heritage. Its existence is intricately woven into the ecological and cultural fabric of our lands and seas and must be preserved as part of our way of life.

From a scientific standpoint, Slow Food Canada undertakes to:

1. Provide a historical characterization of regional salmon species across Canada and their related salmon products as a measure for the recognition of a typical and traditional product of Canada.
2. Assist restoration efforts on both of our coasts to bring salmon populations back to their historic levels, wherever possible.

From a promotional standpoint, Slow Food Canada undertakes to:

1. Provide the names and addresses of the remaining small fishermen, First Nations communities and small-scale salmon processors and suppliers in order to promote them through the media so that the concept of protection goes hand in hand with that of economic return.
2. Promote projects aimed at teaching taste to children from an early age.



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3. Encourage chefs in Canada who are active regional promoters of wild salmon to use them in the preparation of dishes only when in season. Wild salmon should not be on menus every day of the year as a tourist attraction, but should be anticipated and appreciated in season, at the peak of freshness.

Threats to our wild salmon fisheries:

1. Salmon farming weakens the ecological and social capital of coastal communities where livelihoods depend on wild salmon. Over the past two decades, salmon has been degraded from a seasonal delicacy and a celebration of local food to a low-value global commodity. Market value for all salmon, wild and farmed, is 20 percent of what it was a decade ago due to global overproduction of farmed product. Perhaps the most insidious result of the rise of the farmed salmon industry is the loss of connection between people to salmon and to the coastal communities that harvest it.

2. The fish consumed to produce feed are the forage base of the marine communities from which they come. Their mass removal has serious negative impacts on the wild marine communities of coastal Peru, Chile and the North Sea and upon local populations dependent upon these marine species.

3. Salmon are carnivorous. From 3 to 5 kg of wild edible fish are consumed in the production of 1 kg of industrial-grade farmed salmon.

4. On average, farmed salmon flesh contains ten times the toxin load of wild salmon. Ironically, "organic" farmed salmon has been found to contain even greater loads of pollutants.

5. The farmed salmon has been stripped of all ecological and cultural context, interdependencies and regionally based genetic specificity. It has become just another homogenized, industrial, mass-produced commodity.

6. All farmed salmon are kept in high-density, industrial open-net pens. Therefore, they naturally attract and bio-amplify deadly pathogens and parasites that are passed back to wild populations. For instance, recent research has shown that the area around a single typical British Columbia salmon farm generated deadly sea lice at a rate of 33,000 times ambient levels, producing lethal infection of young wild salmon up to 70 km away.

7. On the coast of British Columbia, farmed salmon that are not a native species escape in great numbers and have been shown to invade coastal ecosystems.

8. Consumers purchase organic foods with the understanding that these products are fundamentally superior to their non-organic counterparts. In the case of farmed salmon, this is not true. The endorsement of feed-lot organic farmed salmon in Canada undermines the power and credibility of the organic movement.



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Slow Food Canada calls on everyone to come to the defence of wild salmon species before they are rendered extinct. This fish, which has for thousands of years inspired, given pleasure to and provided sustenance to native populations and newcomers alike, is now at risk as is the livelihood of the fishing communities that catch them. Be aware that once the knowledge, skills and commitment of these fishermen have been lost, they may never be regained and, moreover, a valuable, unique and delicious food source will be gone forever.