Wild Caught? Maybe Not – Salmon Sold to You May Have Been Farm-Raised

The wild caught salmon sold to you in restaurants and grocery stores may have been farm-raised. Unfortunately, the results of a new study suggest that unless you catch it yourself, you can't be sure it wasn't farm raised.

Using DNA testing techniques, the non-profit ocean conservation group Oceana examined numerous samples of fish being sold as wild caught salmon both from restaurant menus and grocery stores. Of the restaurant samples, 2/3 of the "wild-caught" salmon was farm raised. Retail salmon fared better, with one out of five incorrectly labeled. The study also revealed instances of chum salmon being sold as king salmon and rainbow trout sold as wild salmon.

A startling 43% of the salmon tested, collected in New York, Washington, Chicago and Virginia from upscale and takeout restaurants and from various neighborhood and chain groceries, was mislabeled. The most common deception was Atlantic salmon being sold as wild salmon.

These Scientists Say We Need to do Something About It

The researchers authoring the study recommend that new policies be implemented to protect both the public and fishermen from mislabeling.

"*Our results are consistent and wide enough to know that this is a problem that can occur anyplace, anytime, with any type of seafood*," said Kimberly Warner, a senior scientist at Oceana.

Oceana definitely knows what they are talking about. From 2010 to 2012 they conducted an extensive seafood fraud investigation, collecting more than 1,200 seafood samples from 674 retail outlets in 21 states. The objective was to determine if the seafood was honestly labeled. DNA testing found that a full one 1/3 of the 1,215 samples analyzed were mislabeled.

In that earlier investigation, seafood sold as snapper and tuna had the highest chance of being mislabeled. The majority of the samples identified by DNA analysis were not consistent with the labeling. In fact, only seven of the 120 samples of red snapper purchased nationwide were actually red snapper. The other 113 samples were another fish.

Accuracy in Labeling Also Depends on the Time of Year

The current study revealed that the time of year was a big factor in whether or not a restaurant would sell mislabeled salmon. During the winter months, fresh wild salmon is less available, creating a motive to substitute readily available, farmed salmon. The researchers found that large chain groceries were less likely than small grocers to offer mislabeled salmon to the public.

The authors of the study have a few suggestions for consumers looking to protect themselves from purchasing the wrong types of salmon. They suggest consumers ask their sellers about their seafood’s exact point of origin, its species, and whether or not the merchandise was fresh or previously frozen.

Salmon can travel halfway across the world and back before we get a chance to eat it. For instance in 2013, U.S. fisheries exported roughly 85,000 metric tons of salmon to China while importing 37,000 metric tons of salmon from China. Much of this import was the same fish that was shipped to China for

processing.

To cut down on salmon mislabeling, the report's authors are calling for comprehensive tracking of all seafood sold in this country from catch to point of sale.

What's Wrong With Farm Raised Fish?

The first and obvious difference between farm raised and wild caught salmon is the cost. You are being overcharged if you are paying the price for wild caught salmon and not getting what you paid for. But there are other issues at stake. First there is taste, and secondly there are health concerns associated with farm raised fish and shrimp. Pathogens, contamination, and GMO feed are serious quality issues with fish and shrimp being raised in an unnatural and crowded environment. The virulent diseases spread through the salmon farms are suspected to have spread to the wild, severely impacting the wild salmon population. Factory farming raises unhealthy animals, and fish farms are nothing more than factory farms for fish. Stick to wild caught fish – if you can find a trusted source.

Sources:

- *9 Things Everyone Should Know About Farmed Fish* – Dr. Mercola
- Oceana Study Reveals Seafood Fraud Nationwide
- *Though Labeled 'Wild,' That Serving of Salmon May Be Farmed or 'Faux'-NY Times*