

# Alaska Seafood for Takeout and Delivery?


How adding seafood as a pickup or delivery item adds healthy, sustainable and innovative twists to your restaurant menu



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**W**hen restaurants around the world were locked down because of the coronavirus pandemic, some found a way to keep going. During COVID-19, restaurant pickup and takeout grew tremendously. Although takeout and third-party delivery systems, such as Uber Eats, Grubhub and Postmates, were already a huge part of a growing area of foodservice,

**42% of dining rooms that closed added delivery during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>**

Most consumers were locked down as well and were eager to order online for a taste of the outside world—and a sense of normalcy with food from their favorite restaurants.



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Even as restaurants fluctuate between opening for indoor dining and closing when coronavirus cases climb, many consumers still prefer to order online or use a delivery service—and **that trend is here to stay**. Nearly a third of restaurants that added delivery during the lockdown said they plan to keep offering the service, believing consumers will continue wanting to eat restaurant food at home.<sup>2</sup> Another trend is consumer concern over where their food comes from and the sustainability of delivery and preparation.

As chefs develop menus for pickup and delivery that are innovative and tasty, one excellent key ingredient to keep in mind is seafood. During the lockdown, seafood was one of the foods consumers craved most from restaurants.<sup>3</sup> Despite their prevalence on dine-in menus, seafood dishes aren't offered as frequently for takeout. This is an overlooked opportunity for restaurants to stand out from competitors and appeal to consumers who are looking for a restaurant quality meal to eat at home.

# The Universal Love of Seafood

It's easy to see why seafood is a favorite food. It has many outstanding qualities that appeal to customers, chefs and restaurant owners.

For consumers concerned about their health, seafood has a lot to offer. In addition to containing high-quality protein, it contains omega-3 fatty acids, which help reduce inflammation.<sup>4</sup> Seafood also contains Vitamins A, B and D, and a slew of minerals that boost immunity and benefit physical and mental wellbeing.

But it's not just health benefits that draw people to eat seafood—it's the taste. And consumers have difficulty finding foods that both taste good and are good for them, said Mike Kostyo, senior managing editor and trendologist, Datassential.

"Health and wellness is also such a key concern for consumers these days, but it's a very difficult category for operators to be successful in," he said. "It's that classic 'consumers say they want salads but then buy

cheeseburgers' problem." But seafood scores highly for both taste and health, so consumers feel there is less of a tradeoff, he added. It is also the most environmentally friendly animal protein on the planet.

In addition to healthy eating, consumers are also concerned about the environment and increasingly seek food that is sustainable.<sup>5</sup>

**SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD,  
LIKE ALASKA SEAFOOD,  
HAS SEENA**

**+2,075%**

**MENU PENETRATION  
GROWTH**

**SINCE 2009<sup>6</sup>**

*showing that consumers  
feel good about eating it.*



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Chefs love seafood for its variety and opportunity for inventiveness, said Barton Seaver, founder and chief education officer at [SeafoodLiteracy.com](https://www.SeafoodLiteracy.com).

**“Seafood is matched only by vegetables in terms of diversity of tastes, textures, regionality, seasonality and the narrative it offers to creative chefs,” Seaver said.**

That variety extends seafood’s value on the menu, he added.

Restaurant owners also love seafood. They know that while consumers enjoy the food, many don’t feel comfortable preparing seafood dishes at home and rely on dining out to get their fix.<sup>7</sup>

Restaurants fill that need, and they also benefit from having seafood on the menu. “If an operator wants to make sure they have healthy options available, wants to reach those health-conscious consumers, and yet also wants to offer options that consumers perceive to be tasty so you don’t have to worry about unsold product and food waste, seafood is a great option,” Kostyo said.

# Why Alaska Seafood?

Although seafood can come from many regions, Alaska seafood has a specific appeal.

“Alaska seafood is synonymous with impeccable quality as it hails from the icy cold, pristine waters of Alaska,” said Megan Rider, domestic marketing director, Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute. “When consumers see Alaska seafood on the menu, it validates that the restaurant cares about where they source their food.”

Consumers want to know where their food comes from, and 59% of them said they would eat more seafood if they knew the origin, Kostyo said. “When you consider that freshness is such an important concern when it comes to seafood, it makes sense that U.S. consumers would prefer Alaska seafood.”

Alaska seafood offers a diverse portfolio, including salmon, halibut, sablefish, pollock, cod, crab, sole and so much more, Rider said.

The name recognition of Alaska seafood is also a benefit.

AFTER THE NAME ‘OREO’  
.....  
**‘Alaska seafood’**  
IS THE MOST RECOGNIZED  
NAME IN RESTAURANTS

Kostyo said based on Datassential Menu Trends 2020 Database. Seafood is already perceived as a premium product, and the term ‘Alaska seafood’ commands a higher price point.

DATASSENTIAL RESEARCH FOUND THAT

**THE TOP TWO**  
UNAIDED DESCRIPTORS CONSUMERS  
HAVE OF SEAFOOD FROM ALASKA ARE

- .....
- 1. GREAT TASTE**
  - 2. FRESHNESS**

**64%**  
**OF CONSUMERS**  
.....  
ARE MORE LIKELY TO ORDER SEAFOOD  
WHEN THEY SEE THE ALASKA SEAFOOD  
LOGO ON THE MENU.<sup>8</sup>

“Eating out, by definition, is an indulgence for most consumers, so you want them to feel like they are getting their money’s worth, which a proven brand like Alaska seafood can do,” Kostyo said.

FIND CONSUMER SEAFOOD  
PREFERENCE RESEARCH HERE.



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# Tackling the Challenges of Seafood Takeout

Seafood isn't prevalent in just fine dining establishments. It's also widely available in quick-serve and fast-casual restaurants, many of which offer delivery and takeout, Kostyo said. Some of these restaurants even specialize in seafood, like Long John Silver's and Captain D's, he said. "So it's clear that it's possible to offer seafood as a delivery or takeout option."

If people want to order takeout seafood dishes and restaurants benefit from offering this service, **why don't more restaurants offer it on takeout menus?**

For some, it is a sense of caution in offering new items, Seaver said. Seafood can be expensive, and business volumes might be variable. Chefs are concerned about having multiple varieties of seafood on hand because it is perishable. It's no wonder that restaurants fall back on tried, trusted and true known favorites, Seaver said. However, as takeout grows, restaurants must find ways to distinguish themselves from competitors on takeout menus and food ordering sites and meet the needs of consumers who are also looking for excitement, variety and indulgence.



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Seaver says restaurants can easily counter the concern over too much inventory: use frozen Alaska seafood. Although the idea of using frozen seafood was viewed negatively by chefs in the past, the process has improved significantly. Alaska seafood can now be frozen using methods that capture its quality at its peak, Seaver said.

**“Frozen seafood is the future of the seafood industry.”**

Barton Seaver, founder and chief education officer at SeafoodLiteracy.com

By maintaining an inventory of frozen seafood, restaurants can adjust to changing business volumes and keep a diversity of products on the menus, he added.

Kostyo noted that restaurants might hesitate to put seafood on the takeout menu, believing that seafood doesn’t travel well.

That can be true, Seaver agreed. “Fish with a very delicate texture, such as sole, can create some challenges given the jostling inherent in transport.” And because some fish is less dense, it can be challenging to make sure it will be hot enough upon delivery without overcooking it during preparation, he added. However, chefs can avoid those challenges using a variety of techniques.

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# How to Add Seafood to the Menu

Consider the type of fish to use for takeout dishes, Seaver said. If using a delicate fish, include it as an ingredient and not standalone, like sole-based [Alaska Fishcakes](#), which can be served at room temperature, or [Alaska Crab Mac & Cheese](#). Yet another option for avoiding temperature concerns is to offer sushi, Kostyo suggested. “Sushi continues to grow, particularly in younger demographics. Sushi and the next level, sushi burritos, work well for delivery or takeout.”

In addition to the type of seafood they select, chefs can be creative with the preparation, Seaver added. A hot-smoked sockeye salmon flaked into a piping hot risotto will stay warm on the ride home.

## Takeout Menu Tips with Barton Seaver



Creating an Amazing Takeout Menu



Green Salting



Chilled Seafood







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## Alaska seafood can be used in a variety of dishes, said Kostyo:

- **Hand-held foods** continue to be the key when it comes to delivery. Fish and seafood tacos, fish sandwiches, seafood wraps and bowls are growing options for delivery. “Alaska cod is the fastest-growing seafood option on sandwiches today, up 60% on menus overall,” Kostyo said.
- **Fish and chips, popcorn shrimp and fried fish tacos** are popular in quick-serve restaurants (QSR) and would translate well to takeout, he said. “A lot of operators are already familiar with menuing seafood around Lent, so you just have to expand their thinking.” For example, since Americans’ favorite way to eat seafood is grilled, tie that to summer menus and offer blackened salmon for takeout, he suggested.
- Consider **combinations like surf and turf**, which consumers love but are unlikely to prepare at home. For a QSR or fast-casual operator, think about surf and turf salads or surf and turf wraps, he said.
- Use Alaska seafood in **Mexican and Asian cuisine**. The Datassential survey found that in addition to craving seafood during the restaurant lockdown, consumers craved Mexican and Asian dishes. Using seafood as an ingredient in a [Spicy Fish Taco Bowl](#) or an [Alaska Salmon Poke Bowl](#) can address multiple cravings at once.



Consumers are more focused than ever on wellness, Seaver said, and offering seafood on restaurant menus can help. "We, as chefs and keepers and leaders of the food conversation in America, consider it our responsibility to create menus purposed with sustaining people. As we head into another season of the unknown, immunity-supporting, delicious, sustainable foods are more important than ever."

Restaurants around the country are varying their dine-in service, leaving consumers with fewer consistent options for getting the food they enjoy most to eat at home. But whether they are closed for dine-in service or not, restaurants can attract and keep customers by adding and highlighting seafood options on their takeout and delivery menus. **With creativity and planning, restaurants can offer delicious takeout meals that bring a memorable, healthy twist to the menu, profitability to the restaurant and repeat customer business.**

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FISH IS THE

**#1** ANIMAL  
PROTEIN

**consumers believe helps  
boost their immunity and  
strengthen recovery.**

(source: Datassential COVID Research)

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The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) works with all segments of the foodservice industry to increase awareness and broaden the demand for one of the world's most delicious and healthiest protein sources — wild and sustainable Alaska seafood. ASMI is your partner in supplying training tools, nutrition information, recipes, merchandising materials, and promotional ideas that make it easy for you to add customer appeal to your menu and build successful promotions.

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