Smokey Bay presents Canadian Sablefish

Husbandry, Harvesting and Processing Overview

Our husbandry approach to producing this premium sushi grade sablefish is highly technical. Our fish are primarily destined for premium sushi and continental fine-dining with every aspect of culture, harvesting, processing and packaging carefully developed, strictly adhered to and third party audited. Since 2008 our Sablefish, has graced some of the world's most prestigious gatherings and most exquisite restaurants. We hope its quality speaks the care that comes from island grown and locally owned.

Culture

1. Sablefish flesh quality is partly determined by water temperature. Our fish are grown in the coldest waters of British Columbia in the extremely remote waters on the North West tip of Vancouver Island.
2. Density is also important. Our pens are almost 100ft deep which is much deeper than any other fish culture. These custom pens provide these deep sea fish with the dark and room they require to live stress free. Our stocking densities at 8kg per cubic meter are lower even most organic stocking densities.
3. Time to harvest is also a determinant. Salmon reach maturity in 18 months our sablefish take 36 months the extra time in a pristine environment promotes muscle tissue growth resulting in "petal-like" flesh with pronounced striations that chefs covet.

Feed

1. Our custom feed is produced in a small speciality feed producer which is the only producer of organic feed in western Canada. Only marine FAO certified 100% fish oil and fish meal are used with no colorants or hormones. Sablefish Canada is proud of its relationship with its feed producer whose President is a veterinarian and head of the Pacific Organics Standards Association for aquaculture.
2. Salmon are fed twice per day and sometimes more often we have found the highest quality flesh results in fish grown more slowly in very cold water with two-three feedings per week.

HARVESTING

1. Extracting the finished fish from a deep pen must be done very gently and gradually. Sablefish Canada enlisted the advice of two Japanese technicians to help develop a harvesting system that would ensure minimal stress and resulting tissue damage due to excessive PH and lactic acid build up. The system employed consists of a very deep, black air lift pump which is a long tube that slowly sucks the fish in from very deep and sends them on a river of water in total blackness upwards toward the harvest table. It is extremely important to flesh quality that the fish does not struggle or feel any stress before it stunned.
2. The instant the fish arrives in daylight and out of water it is automatically pneumatically stunned. The high pressure side of the gill rakers are then cut by hand to ensure complete blood elimination by the still beating heart. Any residual blood can deteriorate flesh quality and cause flesh colour issues.
3. Central nerve extraction (shinkei-nuki or pithing) is performed on select fish using a Japanese air pithing tool or long pithing wire. This nerve removal will eliminate minute electrical impulses that continue after the fish is dead and can affect flesh quality. Pithing is only done at the request of the customer and is usually for fish destined for very particular sashimi applications.
4. Chilling fish correctly after bleeding is very important for complete blood elongation and flesh quality. Fish chilled too quickly can retain blood while fish not chilled quickly enough can also suffer flesh degradation
5. The success of harvesting procedures is checked continually by use of measures of rigour. Successfully harvest fish should have a specified and very short period of rigour and this rigour should be of minimal severity as measured by standard tools such as a rigour board. The flesh should never show signs of gaping or bruising and the body cavity veins should be almost completely clear of blood.
6. Transport, once harvesting and slow chilling and bleeding is complete the fish should be transported to the processing plant in a very specific ratio of ice to seawater slurry.
7. Temperature records are maintained throughout the procedure and core body temperatures taken at the thickest point of the fish upon arrival at the processing plant.
8. The processing procedure is unique as the fish are moved mechanically through the gutting, washing, grading and weighing stations and not passed from hand to hand or slid along a table. It is important for fish that are to be eaten raw not to be thrown down a dressing table, turned over many times or over handled in any way. Sablefish Canada has also begun separating the livers for a much respected Japanese maker of gourmet seafood products. This process is new to the company and there is much to learn as it must be done with the utmost care with no damage to the delicate liver.
9. Continual adherence to stable temperature between 1-3 degrees C is of critical importance and strict temperature controls are employed.
10. Fish are packed in AS1.5 recyclable styro cases to maximize the amount of sea ice for temperature control to far way markets.
11. Sablefish Canada conducts random temperature checks at Vancouver Airport and our Japanese partners re-check temperatures on arrival in Tokyo ensure that the fish temperature is maintained at the ideal range to ensure the fish has a 12 day shelf-life for raw consumption and to 18 day shelf life for product to be cooked.