



Business profile:
Portland-based Bamboo Sushi is the first independent restaurant in the United States to earn certification for the MSC Chain of Custody. Ordering decisions are mostly made by the owner, with assistance from the executive chef. The restaurant also partners with several other leading oceanic conservation organizations.

Kristofor Lofgren, Owner: The main reason we chose to become MSC-certified was to prove our accountability and traceability to our customers. It's one thing for us to tout our own environmental responsibility, but it means a lot to have a third party, such as the Marine Stewardship Council, validate these claims.

I also wanted to know exactly where all of our seafood was coming from—who caught it, how they caught it, when they caught it—and be able to relay that info to our customers. There's a lot of confusion and "greenwashing" going on in the restaurant industry today. "Organic" or "locally sourced" is not the same thing as sustainable. The MSC ecolabel makes it easy for people to understand this concept.

Environmentalism is extremely important to me. I originally moved to Portland to study environmental law at Lewis & Clark College, but soon realized that wasn't the best way for me to affect rapid change. So now I'm promoting environmentalism through business. I want to prove to people that this model works—not only to help the environment, but to be profitable too.

Sourcing

We offer a wide array of seafood, despite the lack of bluefin, octopus or freshwater eel. At the end of the day, people just want to eat good food. They won't remember that they're missing the bluefin tuna if you give them top quality albacore that tastes even better.





In fact, our customers appreciate that our menu features sustainably caught species.

We've chosen to take extra care in sourcing our seafood, but it's well worth the effort. We buy from more than ten different operations, as opposed to the usual one or two used by most mainstream sushi restaurants. We often get to know the fishermen who actually catch the fish we buy. In addition to sourcing MSC-certified seafood whenever possible, our partnerships with organizations like Monterey Bay Aquarium and Blue Ocean Institute help us find other responsible fishing resources.

Training

Brandon Hill is our executive chef. He and I met and formed a friendship while working together at another Portland sushi restaurant. When I told him I was thinking about opening a sustainable sushi restaurant, he was completely on board. He and I both operate under the philosophy that, "If you know you can do it better, then you should."

When building the rest of our staff, we've taken care to select people who share our passion for the restaurant's environmental goals. People are excited about us, we're excited about them, and it becomes an excellent partnership.

We have a training manual that all of our employees have to study, even the dishwashers. Everyone on staff is fully educated on the MSC, knows what the Chain of Custody is, knows the steps involved, and so on. Our employees learn and share our commitment, and we have a much lower turnover of staff than is typical in the restaurant business.

Audits

The MSC Chain of Custody auditing process has really been quite simple for us. We have both MSC-certified fish and non-certified fish—demonstrating to the auditor how we keep track and keep the two separate hasn't been a problem.

Top Tips:

- *You can go a lot further than just having a "Certified" label on your product. I've worked to develop a marketing voice for our restaurant, promoted what we're doing and educated staff and customers about sustainably sourced products. This extra effort is why our business has grown 100% in the past ten months.*
- *Tracking MSC purchases and sales is very simple for us. We keep note of all MSC sales through our regular point of sale system, so it's no different than tracking sales of Coca-Cola or Sprite.*
- *Find responsible, accountable suppliers and nurture your relationships with them. Choose suppliers who share your goals and commitment to the environment. Sometimes you may need to educate them about MSC and how to become certified so there is no break in Chain of Custody or traceability, but this will only result in a more beneficial relationship for both of you in the long run.*