



Business profile:

Four independent London restaurants worked together with Sustain and MSC to get certified for MSC Chain of Custody and develop user-friendly guidelines for restaurants going for Chain of Custody certification. The restaurateurs are (pictured from left): Sam Clark (Moro), Geetie Singh (The Duke of Cambridge), Oliver Rowe (Konstam) and Caroline Bennett (Moshi Moshi).

Charlotte Jarman, Sustain: “Sustain advocates food policies and practices that improve the living environment, so we were very happy to help to pioneer the MSC logo in restaurants.

“Encouraging a few neighbouring independent restaurants to work together was easier than I’d expected. The restaurateurs we approached are located reasonably close together, they all know each other and they were happy to share information. Although in a sense they are competitors, this wasn’t a problem – perhaps because their customers tend to be the kind of people who eat out quite regularly, so Moro’s customers will go to Konstam and Konstam’s to Moro.

Introducing the concept

I had several meetings with the restaurants and MSC to introduce the idea, and explain what Chain of Custody involves and how the audit process works. We also took them down to meet a group of independent businesses selling MSC fish in Hastings (whose Chain of Custody certification is managed by a local council officer) to see how it had worked for them.

Together, we developed a checklist of what the auditors would be looking for. Our early attempts were met with reactions like “we can’t do that” but it was really about a language barrier – restaurants and auditors use very different languages so we did a lot of work translating the auditor-speak into more restaurant-friendly language, and applying the principles to a





restaurant setting. The restaurants then had to tweak their record-keeping systems to fit myMSC – the MSC’s guide to Chain of Custody. The checklist we produced is available for download from the MSC website.

Ordering and delivery of MSC fish

“There are now several MSC certified suppliers able to provide MSC fish to restaurants. The chefs specify MSC fish when they place their order – or in the case of smaller suppliers, they ask what MSC fish is available. When the fish is delivered, the delivery note and box of fish are cross-checked to ensure that MSC fish is delivered in the right quantity and is clearly labelled.”



Oliver Rowe, Proprietor of Konstam: “We’re keen not to push our environmental values down our customers throats – it’s all about the quality and provenance of the food at Konstam. But not only are the Dover sole we get from Hastings MSC certified - which puts our, and our customer’s, minds at rest - but we source it directly from the fishermen so it’s extremely fresh and of excellent quality.”

Storage and preparation of MSC fish

Charlotte Jarman: “Chefs are already really careful about keeping track of the fish they have in the fridge, so colour-coding or labelling the gastro’s containing the fish was simple to put in place. Once fish has been prepped, it gets returned to the fridge in the same system. There are lots of ways of ensuring separation and traceability, and no one ‘correct’ way. It comes down to what suits each business.”



Record keeping

“The auditor needs to know how much MSC fish is bought, sold and wasted – EPOS systems are great for recording this. Some of the restaurants needed convincing about keeping track of wastage. It isn’t part of everyone’s systems and most people have different ways of recording it. If you only read MyMSC you could get the impression that you have to keep track of every gram but actually, a log of portions and the average weight per portion will also work.

“So, if you note on the invoice e.g. 10kg = 30 portions then you can do your record-keeping in portions rather than counting every gram. In these restaurants, often a portion is simply one fish – Dover sole, mackerel and herring – so an average weight per fish will work.”



Sam Clark, Co-Owner of Moro: “We hardly waste any fish at Moro – it’s expensive! So keeping track of any MSC fish not sold as such, but used for staff meals, fish stock or thrown away, really doesn’t take long – it’s noted in the back of the diary. It also makes us more efficient as a business and aware of what is being thrown away.”

Katrina Clayton, Manager of The Duke of Cambridge: “The invoices come in with the fish. We weigh three fish and put the average on the invoice. You’ve got to keep everything on the record

Photos (from top left)
 Delivery note from a certified supplier, Charlotte Jarman in conversation with the certifier, Duke of Cambridge chef demonstrates clear gastros for MSC fish, Sam Clark receives his certificate at the launch party. From top right: Oliver Rowe helps Sam Clark prepare at the launch event, the MSC logo on the Konstam menu, Moshi Moshi chef prepares teriyaki MSC salmon for the launch party.
 All photographs: Andrew Aitchison.

so I made a spreadsheet of invoices and weights [example available from MSC website]. It is easy to keep up to date and only takes two minutes.”

Training

Charlotte Jarman: “Staff training is vital. We used a PowerPoint training template and a checklist – both can be downloaded from the MSC website for any restaurant to adapt to suit their own business. We started training with kitchen and front of house staff. Some also watched the MSC DVD which you can order from MSC, or find on YouTube.

Caroline Bennett, Proprietor of Moshi Moshi: “What surprised me about the certification process, was that our staff really got into it. They learnt a lot and now are really keen to talk about this huge issue in the seas and about how our business is contributing to the solution”

Serving

Charlotte Jarman: “When you’re preparing for the audit, you have to consider what you’d do in certain situations where there might be a risk of MSC and non-MSC fish being confused. So for example, if you run out of MSC mackerel mid-service, it’s easier to take it off the menu or switch to another species than swapping between MSC fish and non-MSC fish. It also makes it easier on your front of house staff.”

Samantha Clark, Co-owner, Moro: “Our plan at Moro is to offer one of the two fish options as a MSC-certified fish and to display the logo next to the dish, so that even if customers don’t order it, they can see the info and that gets the debate started”.

Top Tips:

- It was helpful to have all four restaurants in a relatively small geographic area to maximise use of the auditor’s time, share expenses and reduce the audit cost.
- Try recording fish in portions rather than weighing every fish.
- When you run out of MSC fish, it is easier to take the dish off the menu than swap MSC fish for non-MSC fish.
- It might be easier if the person responsible for maintaining Chain of Custody isn’t in the kitchen – e.g. the general manager is often in a good position to keep track of paperwork.
- You can download the checklist, example spreadsheet and PowerPoint training presentation that we produced from the MSC website – www.msc.org. You’ll need to adapt them to suit your business, but they should save you time in preparing for your audit.

