

Sushi restaurant is going sustainable

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Steven Nehl/The

Oregonian Brandon Hill, executive sushi chef, puts finishing touches on a dish at Bamboo Sushi. The Northeast Portland restaurant is the nation's first with a Marine Stewardship Council Chain of Custody certification.

Kristofor Lofgren likes doing things that have never been done before. And he likes being kind to the environment.

Today, he'll achieve both when he reopens his Portland sushi restaurant as the first in the nation with a [Marine Stewardship Council Chain of Custody](#) certification.

That means some of the seafood served at Bamboo Sushi (formerly Masu East), [310 S.E. 28th Ave.](#), will come from fisheries that meet the council's standards for sustainability. The rest will comply with Monterey Bay Aquarium guidelines for responsible fishing. Lofgren also is working to get Green Restaurant Association certification.

"I've been a lifelong environmentalist and realized the error of my ways in investing in a sushi restaurant," says Lofgren, 26, whose 1,500-square-foot space is adorned with earth tones and simple black-framed origami art. "Most if not all sushi restaurants really don't know where more than half of their fish come from."

The nonprofit stewardship council, based in London and with offices in Seattle, is devoted to sustainable fishing. Besides certifying businesses, its blue labels can be found on seafood in stores.

"It's important to have traceability, not just in food but in everything," says Susan Marks, commercial manager for the council's U.S. arm. According to a 2005 United Nations report, an estimated one-quarter of the world's fish stocks are exploited, depleted or recovering from depletion.

In Portland, Bamboo Sushi will join many businesses, including restaurants such as trailblazer Higgins, that promote sustainable practices.

Andrew Essreg, who heads enVision Sustainability, a Colorado firm that helps businesses develop environmental practices, says it's no longer a matter of if a venture adopts environmental and social strategies — but how.



Steven Nehl/The Oregonian Kristofor Lofgren

"Sustainability is more mainstream, like vanilla or chocolate, nowadays than 'insert your own specialty flavor,'" he says.

Still, running a restaurant while adhering to principles isn't easy.

"It requires a different type of passion and commitment every day," says Marco Shaw, chef and owner of Fife restaurant in Northeast Portland, where everything but the salt, pepper and citrus comes from within 100 miles. "January comes, and there's only one fish on the coast of Oregon. I have to make a menu with four crops."

At Higgins in downtown Portland, owner Greg Higgins has followed a local and organic philosophy for almost 15 years. His restaurant uses natural or organic meats, seafood that adheres to the Monterey guidelines and local produce whenever possible.

"We try to pride ourselves in buying the cleanest food we can from local sources and have a fun time cooking it," he says.

Relying on what's available can lead to surprising ingredients. "The decisions are made for you, and it's up to you to figure out how to combine them," Higgins says. "Really good food is about scarcity; it's not about abundance."

Lofgren understands what he's up against. "It's a scary risk, especially right now," he says, alluding to the souring economy. But he's committed to change, especially given the size of the restaurant industry.

With 13.1 million employees, restaurants are the nation's second-largest employer, second only to government, according to the National Restaurant Association.

"There's a lot of power in this," Lofgren says.

--*Nicole Santa Cruz*

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Best sushi in Portland! You can check out their menu on their web site at

<http://www.bamboosushipdx.com/>

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