

NATIONAL CULINARY REVIEW

RAW FISH RAVE



THE CHALLENGE OF BALANCE

Why "family first" is easier said than done in the food industry.

HOT HONEY & HARISSA

Beyond basic heat, consumers are craving complex, layered spice.

A MORE INCLUSIVE INDUSTRY

Why understanding and accommodations matter in the modern kitchen.



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INNOVATING WITH RAW SEAFOOD

Global ingredients, newfound varieties and creative presentations are driving demand.

By Jeffrey Spear

Chefs around the country are finding that dishes featuring raw fish are resonating favorably with their guests. Despite this newfound popularity, the idea of raw seafood as a culinary mainstay is nothing new. Historical records reveal that the use of raw fish has been part of numerous global cuisines for centuries. It wasn't until the late 60s in Los Angeles, a time when sushi was being introduced by Japanese restaurateurs to a wider American audience, that the idea of eating raw fish caught on.

Around the same time, raw seafood was being promoted as a source of lean protein, omega-3 fatty acids, and other essential nutrients, making it even more appealing to a growing, health-conscious audience.

Raw Seafood is a Trend

The widespread acceptance of raw seafood in today's restaurants is influenced heavily by the longstanding popularity of sushi and sashimi and unmistakable demand for dishes with distinctive global origins. Whether it's served as sushi or sashimi (Japanese), ceviche or tiradito (Peruvian), aguachile (Mexican), carpaccio or crudo (Italian), tartare (French) or poke (Hawaiian), raw seafood can be incorporated into a variety of dishes, including alluring appetizers, healthy salads and innovative main dishes.

Statistics from Datassential indicate that, no matter the application, tuna, salmon, hamachi, and scallops tend to be the most popular. When available, chefs are embracing an even wider range of finfish including fluke, black sea bass, and aji (horse mackerel) along with several species of Amberjack including Hamachi (*Seriola quinqueradiata*), Hiramasa (*Seriola lalandi*), Kona Kampachi (*Seriola rivoliana*), and Kampachi (*Seriola dumerili*), each with distinctly different colors, textures, and flavors. When it comes to poke



ACF Chef David Turin



Tuna Crudo by Chef David Turin

(bowls), there are endless opportunities for innovation and customization, allowing chefs to blend familiar foods with trend-forward ingredients.

To prove this point, here's a quick look at just a few of the more interesting raw seafood dishes appearing on menus across the country: Fluke Tiradito (coconut creme, chili herb oil, jalapeño, finger lime, cilantro) from Boston's Saltie Girl; Spot Prawn Crudo (quince vinegar, hazelnut, apricot) prepared by The Walrus and the Carpenter in Seattle; and Aguachile Bajamar (raw shrimp, lime juice, beets, onions, carrots, habanero chili, cucumbers) from Las Vegas based Bajamar Seafood & Tacos.

Creativity Rules

No matter the application, there's a tremendous amount of creativity that goes into the preparation of raw fish dishes. Aside from the selection of incredibly fresh and flavorful species, the dish must be eye catching without being fussy, simple yet exciting, all while maintaining an artful balance between flavor and texture.

ACF Chef David Turin, CEC, owner of David's Restaurants in Portland, ME, tells us, "Preparing raw fish dishes, whether Italian, Peruvian, Asian or other global influence, have uniquely different flavor profiles and are really fun to formulate, finding the right balance of oils, fruits, vinegars and spices." When asked about his menu, he continues, "Our Pepper Tuna Crudo (with pickled cucumber, habanero yuzu kosho sauce, cilantro oil, scallion, and sesame fried corn) has performed well and has been a popular item for us."



Chef Bailey Campbell



Halibut Ceviche by 167 Raw

At 167 Raw in Charleston, NC, ceviche is one of their most talked about dishes. As a small plate, the combination of its flavors, textures and visual presence gives it tremendous appeal. **Chef Bailey Campbell** attributes this popularity to several factors. "I read a lot and have acquired a deep vocabulary of flavors and ingredients that I bring to every dish. Plus, the freedom to embrace global cuisines makes my job easy." Recognizing the importance of quality and freshness, he adds,

"As long as you start with absolutely fresh, high-quality ingredients, you're in good shape."

Having access to a variety of incredibly flavorful ingredients, including an eclectic selection of seafoods, is a sentiment shared by **Chef and Owner Chris Gould** at Central Provisions in Portland, ME. "Our guests come to us for new experiences, including ingredients they're not familiar with." When it comes to the integrity of the raw seafoods employed, he continues, "Of course, adequate training, knowing how to handle raw seafoods, is important. Plus, a good relationship with purveyors you trust to suggest and deliver super fresh fish is essential."

Ensuring the Absolute Best

When developing raw seafood dishes for your menu, it's important to know which seafoods your guests will understand, if there are regional preferences in terms of species, texture, and flavor, how the fish breaks down, which parts will deliver the performance you're after, and which species are seasonal and/or available year-round.

According to **Alisha Lumea**, VP Marketing and Brand Strategy for Wulf's Fish, a renowned Boston-based seafood distributor, "It's important to work with vendors that understand where the fish is coming from, how it's been handled, how it performs on the plate and, from a health safety perspective, eliminate any concerns about parasites." She sums it all up by saying, "You go to a sommelier for wine recommendations. A good fishmonger should be able to do the same, helping you find the products and cuts that suit your culinary vision and budget."

Considering the variety and unwavering popularity of raw seafood, coupled with the high levels of creativity on display across a wide variety of applications, it's a safe bet that these dishes, especially when you consider their healthfulness halo, will be appearing on menus for a long time to come.



Chef Chris Gould



Toro Bluefin Tartare by Central Provisions