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UNH Eats Equitably: North Coast Seafood

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by Paul Young, AmeriCorps VISTA

Guest blogger Paul Young is an AmeriCorps VISTA member serving at the University of New Hampshire on Food Security and other Basic Needs initiatives. Paul has a passion for food systems and how they interact with climate change, health, opportunity and so much more.

While working at UNH, in addition to working with the Sustainability Institute on the 21 Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge, he has helped launch a food repurposing kitchen and the Cats' Cupboard (the UNH food pantry).

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Central to University of New Hampshire's (UNH) mission is its belief in the importance of environmental and social sustainability. This is visible

in the decisions UNH Dining and Hospitality Services makes in how it sources ingredients. Research has shown that seafood is the most carbon-efficient source of protein on the planet. Opting for a diet with more seafood can be a great way to reduce your carbon footprint and UNH's seafood supplier is [North Coast Seafoods](#), based in Boston, MA.

This amazing company has been operating for over 70 years. What started as a small family company committed to quality, trust and reliability has grown to be one of the largest seafood companies in the Northeast while still holding to those same ideals.

I was able to talk with Andrew Wilkinson, Chef Director of Research and Development (R&D), about North Coast Seafoods, [their values](#) and their commitment to [sustainability](#) and [quality](#). Andrew started off by talking about how they tend to work with UNH and other similar institutions that have issues of environmental and social sustainability at the center of their mission. "We do our best work with the people who are asking the questions about sustainability... integrity and labor practices."

North Coast spotlights their values of being authentic, uncompromising, dependable, innovative, and ultimately accountable.



Andrew mentioned that you don't survive in this industry for 70 years without great products and the trust of your suppliers and customers.

Since the early 1950s North Coast has built a business on trust and integrity - and it begins with their people. They partner with the most dependable, responsible, and expert fishermen in local communities throughout the world. North Coast calls them the backbone of their business.

Something Andrew said that would probably shock people is that unlike beef, chicken or pork, seafood is somewhat of an unregulated industry. You cannot produce a single ounce of beef, chicken or pork without a

USDA inspector standing right next to you watching every single move you make. That does not happen in the seafood industry. It makes the relationships with the families and local fishermen they work with even more important. Everything needs to be done properly in accordance with international standards to ensure the seafood is 100% sustainable. North Coast partners with local and international sustainability groups to provide certified sustainable seafood. These groups include Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP), the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) and Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPS).

In an industry plagued by overfishing and environmentally damaging practices, North Coast sources their seafood from pinnacle locations around the world to ensure their partners prioritize responsible, sustainable fishing practices. North Coast sources their Wild Cod from Alaska or Iceland and their salmon from Alaska, New Brunswick, or Norway because those locations have the most abundant, well-managed, sustainable supply of fish.

Every product North Coast provides can be traced back to the fisherman who harvested it and they have been in business with some of these fishermen since their company's



inception 70 years ago. This creates a community of trust and allows the fishermen to understand the strict quality control standards that North Coast demands. North Coast does not accept anything other than the highest level of quality. Everything that comes through their doors is inspected to ensure quality expectations, or it will not be accepted.

“Some fishermen may think we are too fussy or demanding, but we do not settle for fish that are sometimes fresh. We demand superior freshness and the finest quality always. That is what our customers deserve.”

When asked what the most important thing for the future of the seafood

industry and sustainability is, there might have been a millisecond before Andrew emphatically stated “Education! ...We have messed up our oceans and rivers by overfishing and improperly using the resources available to us.” Since seafood is not regulated to the level of other meats, it is important that the consumer understands what they are eating and the importance of sustainably harvested seafood. There are also so many great edible fishes that people just refuse to eat because they aren’t the same fish their grandparents ate.

It is projected that there will be 10 billion people in the world in 2050. If we are to have climate change in a manageable place and still have enough protein for the world, we need to eat more fish. To have enough fish to keep meeting our needs, we need to make sure our companies are sustainably harvesting them.

The fact that North Coast has always followed sustainable and high-level quality control standards and still has grown to the scale that they have is proof that other companies can do the same. North Coast Seafoods gives me hope that we can find a way to feed the world and not destroy the planet while doing it.

North Coast Seafood’s clam chowder was featured in the UNH Holloway Commons on April 8, 2022 during the [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#).

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