



Copper River Watershed Project

Upriver and down, salmon are common ground

2015 – 2016 Copper River Salmon Restaurant Series, Grant Report

The Copper River/PWS Marketing Association awarded \$6,000 to the Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP) for the purpose of holding at least three restaurant events to promote Copper River salmon brand identity. A contract was signed in September, 2015 and since then the CRWP has coordinated five restaurant events (unless otherwise noted, Kristin Carpenter attended the event):

- October 8, Portland, Oregon, at The Urban Farmer: 32 guests, Kate Morse attended. All of these guests had some prior connection to the CRWP or Copper River salmon, and we learned that salmon in Portland, OR is not quite as distinctive as it is in other parts of the country. This event was listed in the on-line magazine Eater/Portland, OR: <http://pdx.eater.com/2015/10/19/9565329/meadowlark-urban-farmer-special-dinners>.
- October 9, Denver, Colorado, at TAG Restaurant: this event did not have designated seating, the event was poorly promoted by the restaurant, and I learned that restaurant staff may need to be prompted to use key words, e.g. Alaska, Copper River, wild salmon, for event promotion.
- June 1, Minneapolis, Minnesota at Oceanaire: 44 guests, dedicated seating but in the main dining room, so I was not able to present to diners as a group because of background noise. I circulated and spoke with most people individually. The restaurant did promote this event actively, and I learned from one group of diners that they bought tickets as soon as they received the promotional e-mail from the restaurant mailing list.
- June 2, Minneapolis, Minnesota at The Birchwood Café: 36 diners, sold out; attended by Amanda Paa, a food blogger who visited Cordova as part of the summer media tour in 2015. This dinner featured two other speakers, one from Right to Know MN about genetically-modified labeling, and Matt Oxford who fishes in Homer and does seafood direct marketing at Minnesota farmer's markets. When I called Tracy Singleton, the owner, to ask about holding an event at her restaurant, the first question she asked me was whether we could talk about genetically-modified salmon! She says "I believe you have to be political about your food" because it's connected to so many issues that affect our lives. After this event, Tracy sent an e-mail message to the Café's mailing list about it (see attached PDF). This event was

also attended by four staff from The Fish Guys seafood distributor. Mike Higgins, President of The Fish Guys, might be a good potential media tour participant. He's very knowledgeable about seafood and sourcing. His company does offer farmed salmon because he has some customers who want that.

- June 8, Wilton, Connecticut at The Schoolhouse: 42 diners, sold out in one weekend after being promoted by the restaurant. Owner Chef Tim LaBant and his wife Julie LaBant participated in the 2015 fall media tour and prepared the meal for the Wild Harvest Feast as part of the Fungus Festival weekend. Tim spoke at this event about his experience in Cordova, and he and Julie rave about their experiences here every time I speak with them. Ahead of this event, the local on-line news outlet ran a fairly long piece about Chef Tim and his visit to Alaska:

<https://goodmorningwilton.com/schoolhouse-chefs-salmon-adventure-to-alaska-is-wilton-diners-gain/>

A total of \$2,750 has been contributed to the CRWP from the restaurants themselves. After having mailed two newsletters (spring and fall, 2016) to people with whom we connected at these dinners, we are just now sending out a membership solicitation mailing to guests.

Each event followed roughly the same outline and had similar elements. We sent out "save the date" cards for each event (see attached). For each dinner, the CRWP arranged to provide sockeye salmon and sometimes some other seafood for the meal, and in exchange the restaurant made a contribution to the CRWP. As they arrived, guests were invited to fill out a small card (featuring the Copper River salmon logo) with their contact information so that we are able to follow up with folks afterward, and begin cultivating a relationship with Copper River salmon fans. We used the contact information cards to conduct a drawing for jars of smoked salmon (hugely popular). T-shirts from the CR/PWS MA were also used as drawing prizes at some events.

Places were set with a half-sheet menu, prepared by the restaurant, which noted the processor from whom the salmon was purchased (Copper River Seafoods for some, Northern Fish Alaska for others). Other seafood items purchased included smoked salmon and broth from Copper River Seafoods that was used in a chowder (it comes from the Vital Choice web site). At three of the dinners, CRWP staff were able to speak for 10 - 15 minutes about Copper River salmon, the watershed, and the fishery.

At all events, each guest received a small "goodie bag" to take home that contained salmon recipe cards, the CR/PWS MA pocket guide, the large postcard size promotion card, a "slammin' salmon" spice packet, and a CRWP sticker. We made CRWP newsletters available too.

Diners always have lots of questions, the most common being:

- How are the salmon populations protected from over-fishing?

- Why should I eat wild instead of farmed (often people think that “wild” = “endangered”)?
- How can I know if what I’m eating is really wild (or truly from Alaska, or the Copper River)?
- Why can I only get Copper River salmon in early summer? This might (still) be the biggest area for education opportunities.
- How many people fish on a boat? People are ALWAYS amazed to hear that one person can manage a fishing boat, they only seem to have images of much larger boats in their field of reference and I think the drift gillnet technique makes for a much more interesting, personal story. I tell people often that “every boat in our harbor is a family owned business,” and that makes the scale of this fishery much more personal and approachable to people who know little about fishing for a livelihood.

The two messages I try to convey to people when I speak at these events are:

1. The Copper River watershed is an intact river system, and we need to keep it that way to keep salmon on your plate;
2. When you cook salmon at home, don’t over-cook it. I talk about this because it seems that we want people to have a great dining experience at these events, and then to look for salmon in the grocery store and cook it at home.

As part of promoting the CRWP during these events, we offer a membership deal of \$75 for membership plus a salmon cook book like Diane Morgan’s *Salmon* or *Fishes & Dishes*. We don’t get a lot of membership contributions at these events because, I think, people feel like they already shelled out for the evening and aren’t in the mood to spend more. But that’s why we collect the contact information, so we can follow up by sending newsletters so they get to know us. We’re sending out an appeal letter right after Thanksgiving, after they’ve heard from us a couple of times. I also sent out an e-mail message to people we met through these events with a link to the EDF Seafood Selector page on salmon (<http://seafood.edf.org/salmon>), a special offer from Copper River Seafoods, and a link to Diane Morgan’s new *Salmon* cookbook.

If we were to do future restaurant events, I think we could take the education element of these events further by setting up a connection with a local retailer near the restaurant. That way we’d be able to say “you’ve just had a fantastic meal here, now you can purchase Copper River salmon and cook it at home too.” Maybe we’d be able to arrange offering a 10% discount coupon sponsored by the retailer to provide an even greater incentive for folks to purchase retail salmon. Or maybe a retailer would run a promotion for two weeks after a restaurant event that involves contributing a certain amount to the CRWP for every sale or for X pounds sold of Copper River salmon and the charitable contribution angle would be an incentive for people to buy Copper River salmon (making them feel good about contributing to salmon habitat work with their purchase).

Chef Tim LaBant also mentioned the idea of him getting together with some of his “chef buddies” for an evening to talk about salmon, sharing ideas for how to cook it, and he would show his friends photos from his trip to Alaska. He wasn’t able to do this the evening before the dinner event held at his restaurant, but I think it would be good to send him a few fish if he agrees to plan a future date to do it.

Comments from some of the chefs we worked with include:

- TAG in Denver: chef liked how the salmon cooked (quickly), found it very easy to work with.
- Birchwood Café: Chef Marshall Paulsen: “The fish was fresh and gorgeous . . .really beautiful and colorful.” In response to the question “do you feel like you have to work to educate your guests about salmon, or are they receptive to wild Alaska salmon?”, Marshall wrote “I think a little education about sourcing in general is good.”
- Chef Andrew Wilson at Oceanaire Seafood Room, Minneapolis: we feature fresh sockeye, coho, and king (when they can get it) salmon, “we love the product.” Oceanaire buys from Fortune Fish & Gourmet (out of Chicago, purchased Coastal Seafoods in July, 2016) and from The Fish Guys (Minneapolis).

Event partnership summary conclusions:

- Establishing a signed agreement between the restaurant and event host is good practice; we didn’t always do this, but we did use an agreement sometimes and we have a template to use now if we were to do similar events in the future.
- Having media tour connections is a big help with event promotion and finding a good restaurant partner.
- More education needed around seasonal availability of Copper River salmon. At one restaurant I visited in Dallas, Texas several years ago, which also has a retail seafood sales shop, the owner explained that he tried to offer coho salmon once but customers didn’t believe it was Copper River salmon because it was so much cheaper than sockeye and king salmon, so he stopped carrying it.

Thank you for the opportunity to host these events!



Copper River Watershed Project

Upriver and down, salmon are common ground

Copper River salmon run from May through September,
but we work all year long to make sure their home river system is healthy!

Would your restaurant be willing to work with us as a partner to help support habitat restoration and monitoring for wild Copper River salmon?

Goals:

- benefit Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP) by helping us reach new audiences
- benefit your restaurant by drawing followers of Copper River salmon to your tables
- host a dinner event in early June, 2016

CRWP can contribute:

- wild Copper River coho salmon for a meal for 30 - 80 people (salmon provided by Copper River/Prince William Marketing Association)
- a guest speaker
- printed materials and guest take-home bag



www.copperriver.org

The CRWP works to foster the health of the Copper River watershed's salmon-based cultures, communities, and economies.

From: Tracy Singleton tracy@birchwoodcafe.com
Subject: Fwd: Thank you for coming to our Booster Club Dinner!
Date: June 7, 2016 at 2:28 AM
To: Tracy Singleton tracy@birchwoodcafe.com
Bcc: kristin@copperriver.org

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Dear Birchwood BOOSTers~

Thank you so much for joining us for last Thursday's BOOSTer Club Dinner for [Right to Know MN](#) and [The Copper River Watershed Project](#)! Thanks too to Seward Co-op for partnering with us, and sharing Chef Adam Vickerman. What a delicious and inspiring evening!

Something truly special happens when we come together to eat good real food and talk about how our food comes to us and how it impacts our community. As Margaret Mead said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has".

I'm so grateful to our presenters, Kristin Carpenter from CRWP and Heather Flesland from RTKMN, for sharing their passion and I encourage you to follow the critical work of both organizations. And please stay especially tuned over the next few weeks for a call-to-action from Right to Know MN. The Senate will be back in session this week and with only 23 days left until Vermont's GMO labeling law goes into effect, we want to be ready for any last minute shenanigans that would codify QR codes or 1-800 numbers and preempt state's rights to label. The current message to our Senators in DC is "If you can't pass a federal bill that is at least as strong as Vermont's, then stand back and let the states do their job in standing up for their citizens' right to know".

I also wanted to let you know where to find our local fisherman, Matt Oxford of [Wild Run Salmon](#). I'm thrilled he was able to join us and share his story. Matt will be heading back to Alaska soon but you can find him this upcoming weekend at the Mill City Farmer's Market on Saturday, 6/11 and at the Kingfield Market on Sunday, 6/12. For now he has lots of that tasty cod we all enjoyed with the chowder (thank you Chefs!) and he'll be back from Alaska and back at the markets with Salmon mid August. Start planning your own late summer Alaska Salmon cookouts now!

I'm grateful too that our local fish mongers, [The Fish Guys](#), were at the table. If we learned anything, we learned that knowing where our fish comes from can be complicated and there isn't one label that tells the whole story. Locally, the Fish Guys' retail division supplies Lunds, Kowalski's, Coborns and the Wedge. I'm confident that Mike Higgins, Fish Guys President & CEO would be happy to answer any questions you may have. And please, when shopping and eating out, always ask the question, "Where is your fish from? Is it wild or farmed?" and if you are not satisfied with

the answer, that is the moment to exercise your consumer power and "be the change" by expressing your preference for the the type of food you want to eat and the type of food system you want to support.

Our next [BOOSTer Club Dinner](#) will be Thursday, July 28th for [Urban Roots](#), a wonderful organization based on the east side of St. Paul that connects kids with amazing opportunities through cooking, gardening, conservation and community service work. Special guest chefs Daniel Klein (Perennial Plate) and Yia Vang (Union Kitchen), together with our chef Marshall, will prepare a fabulous, five-course meal of Hmong-inspired dishes including produce sourced from Urban Roots!

Ticket proceeds go to support Urban Roots and their mission to build vibrant and healthy communities through food, conservation, and youth development.

Hope to see you at another BOOST event or at the cafe soon!

With love & gratitude,

Tracy

Booster Club Salmon Dinner

🕒 Thursday, June 2, 2016 from 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM (CDT)

📍 Birchwood Cafe - Community Room
3311 East 25th Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406

Organized by [Birchwood Cafe](#)



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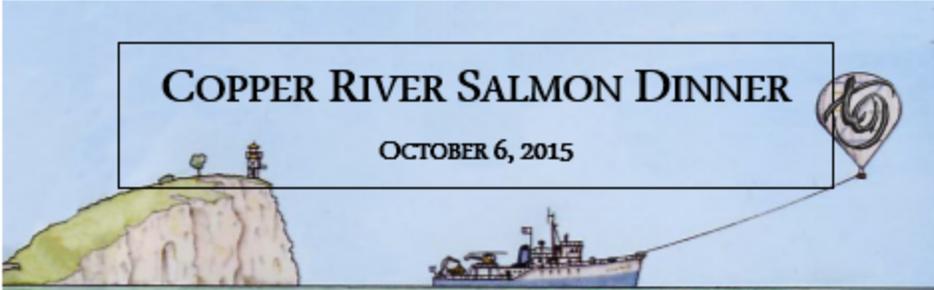


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COPPER RIVER SALMON DINNER

OCTOBER 6, 2015

SUPPORT THE LIFE AQUATIC!

Join forces & forks with us at TAG on October 6
as we dine to raise awareness for the Alaskan
Copper River Watershed.

Enjoy 3 courses + parings, meet a real live salmon
fisherwoman, and support the salmon
we all know & love.

**TAG will donate 15% of the dinner proceeds to
CPRW project!**

Our environment, economy, and our society all
depend on a healthy watershed



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\$65 PER PERSON + TAX & GRATUITY