INTRODUCTION

Seafood is a broad category of aquatic animals that includes freshwater and saltwater fish, molluscan shellfish, and crustaceans. Seafood is a nutrient-dense, low-fat food that is a good source of protein, vitamins, and minerals. Nutrient-dense foods generally provide positive health benefits, with relatively few calories.

The current recommendation from the government and health organizations is to eat two seafood meals each week from a variety of seafood. However, current per capita consumption of all seafood in the United States falls inadequately short of the recommended amount of seafood per week. Research supports the determination that scientists from universities and government, and healthcare professionals have all concluded that for most people the overall benefits of eating seafood twice per week outweigh potential food safety risks.

Dietary Guideline for Americans 2010

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 make several key recommendations regarding weight management, foods and food components to reduce, and foods and nutrients to increase. Specifically, for seafood the Guidelines recommend:

- Increase the amount and variety of seafood consumed by choosing seafood in place of some meat and poultry.
- Choose a variety of protein foods, which include seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.

For women who are pregnant or breastfeeding:

- Consume 8 to 12 ounces of seafood per week from a variety of seafood types.
- Due to their high methyl mercury content, limit white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces per week and do not eat the following four types of fish: tilefish, shark, swordfish, and king mackerel.

Benefits of Seafood Education

Given the actual amount of seafood consumed by Americans compared to the current dietary advice of eating seafood twice per week, it is believed that increased knowledge can lead to better-informed consumers and increased consumption of seafood. An increase in knowledge does not ensure intended changes in consumption patterns, however, and dietary advice is but one factor influencing food choice.
A complex informational environment influences food choice. Factors that influence choosing seafood are similar to choices of other foods, such as taste, price, convenience, and ease of preparation. Consumers do not think they have enough information about seafood such as:

- Where seafood comes from;
- Benefits and risks of eating seafood; and
- How to select, handle, store, and prepare seafood.

**Target Audience**

The target audience for this curriculum includes family and consumer sciences educators, nutritionists, dieticians, food service personnel, and nutrition outreach professionals. The learner audience is your clientele. A growing body of scientific evidence demonstrates that the dietary and physical activity recommendations described in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010* may help people attain and maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk of chronic disease, and promote overall health. *Seafood at Its Best* provides an opportunity for teaching the specific seafood recommendations of the Guidelines; a food that is low in calories and a source of high-quality protein. This curriculum is designed to educate clientele about seafood, often poorly understood in terms of selection, handling, storage, preparation, health benefits, and actual risks relative to perceived risks.

**Instructor’s Notes**

Some sections of the curriculum provide extensive technical background information, especially lesson 3. This information is for your benefit; you do not need to present all of it to your clientele.

Due to the amount of material in the curriculum, you may find it easier to present the material over two or more days, rather than attempt to do it all on one day. Whenever you can, tailor the curriculum to local conditions. For example, if you live on the coast, you may want to emphasize shellfish and marine fish.
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The Seafood at Its Best curriculum comprises four lessons:

1. What is Seafood?
   • Definition of seafood
   • Where our seafood comes from
   • Consumer preferences
   • Future seafood supply and demand

2. Health Benefits
   • Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010
   • Health benefits associated with eating seafood
   • Seafood recommendations

3. Seafood-Borne Illnesses and Risks from Eating Seafood
   • Potential health risks associated with eating seafood
   • Context on the potential health risk of eating seafood
   • Seafood safety inspection and Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)

4. Selecting, Buying, Handling, Storing, and Cooking
   • Selecting seafood products
   • Amount of seafood to purchase
   • Storing seafood
   • Cooking seafood

The curriculum materials consist of an introduction for the instructor, lecture notes, an introduction for each lesson, suggested activities, a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson, references for additional information, and evaluation tools.

Two recommended sources of additional information are Seafood Health Facts: Making Smart Choices, Balancing the Benefits and Risks of Seafood Consumption. Resources for Healthcare Providers and Consumers (http://seafoodhealthfacts.org/) and Seafood Network Information Center, Sea Grant Extension Program (http://seafood.oregonstate.edu/)

Information on a variety of topics is available from these two sites, including consumer seafood information, health and nutrition, benefits and risks and, sustainability and regulations. Additionally, publications for downloading and other links are provided.