

Wild NSW Saltwater Eels

Australian Food Service Market Investigation

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Purpose

This document details feedback received from chefs about the palatability and potential for inclusion of Wild NSW Saltwater Eels in their establishments

Approach

The Fish Girl was engaged to work with NSW eel fishers to test the palatability and potential for Wild NSW Saltwater eels to be used by their establishment. The initial announcement was posted on Instagram and several chefs expressed an interest in discovering more. These were then invited to try the product by cooking it and using it as they might if they were to put it on their menu.

Findings

Originally 50 eels were ordered for this trial. However, only 24 were ultimately supplied. This meant that only half of the chefs interested in trying the product were supplied with fish. Not supplying fish when promised is never good. Supply issues need to be resolved before additional trials are conducted.

Eels were ultimately provided to 13 chefs, who then trialled the product and provided feedback. Some provided pictures of the product as they prepared it (see Appendix 1) while others provided verbal feedback (see Appendix 2).

Generally, the feedback was quite positive. There was an issue of a muddy taste with some of the products supplied, but that same product cooked in another style was deemed okay. Some chefs are happy to receive the product whole and then process it themselves, while others would prefer to receive it processed (HGG).

Next steps

1. NSW PFA to work with eel fishers to identify those who are willing to commit to supplying the product when it is ordered. Participating fishers will need to sign a code of conduct.
2. NSW to document the supply, seasonality and fishing effort parameters that dictate the availability of eels. This will help set expectations about supply.
3. NSW PFA to investigate using tags to identify fish that are part of the program. Tags to include a code that confirms authenticity (link back to the website)
4. The Fish Girl to conduct a further trial in March 2023 to gather more feedback about the quality and potential for Australian food service, initially focusing on Qld and NSW. Finalise the value proposition and create the website
5. H&F to develop a pricing model that includes all production, freight and distribution costs and provides an acceptable return to everyone in the supply chain

Appendix 1: Eels Project: Chef feedback (October 2022)

Sushi Room

Chef: Shimpei.



Feedback:

Could process their own eels, the bigger one was fattier, but had a little muddy flavour to it. 30 mins to cook. Grilled on fire. Cooked with Wasabi and sansho pepper

Currumbin Valley Estate

Chef Aaron Teece,



Feedback: Hot smoked, his. Could use, depending on pricing.

The Star Casino

Chef: Carlyne Helmy.



Feedback: Steamed eel came out chewy. Tempura and grilled were the best way. Did a teriyaki sauce for the grilled eel. Fuikake mix for tempura

Gerards bistro.
Chef: Adam Wolfers.



Feedback: Cooked it over fire, some parts were good, the skin was a little too chewy for them. Good fat content

Appendix 2: Summary chef feedback

Date	End User	Contact Name	Cuisine	Notes
13/10/2022	Aussea	Harry	Wholesaler	processed eels for us
	Bisou Bisou	Jeff	French	Their restaurant is French, so for them, could only think of hot smoking the product
	Iris Bar	Lloyd	Spanish	Put in a salt cured, and hot smoked. Really good tasty. Hardest part was filleting. Not sure if they could menu it with "Eel"
	Blackbird	Tim	Steak house	Hot smoked theirs, and and boiled. Had good fat content. Would prefer to have it already smoked, too much labour involved.
	Sushi Room	Shimpei	Japanese	could process their own eels, the bigger one was fattier, but had a little muddy flavour to it. 30 mins to cook. Grilled on fire. Cooked with Wasabi and sansho pepper
	Agnes	Ken-su/ Alex	Woodfire	Dry aged it, cooked over the fire, had good flavour, but not for them.
14/10/2022	The Star Casino GC	Carolyne	Casino	Steamed eel came out chewy. Tempura and grilled were the best way. Did a teiyaki sauce for the grilled eel. Fuuikake mix for tempura
	Hota	Dayan	Fine/function	Filletted down, and cooked over habachi. Really interested, thought it was really good. Wants to know pricing.
	Currumbin Valley Estate	Aaron	Functions	Hot smoked, his. Could use, depending on pricing.
	Yoko	Oscar	Japanese	Liked the product, dry aged it, got an under 1kg eel, too small. The other bigger one was easier to handle.
	Greca	Tom	Greek	Cooked it over the grill, there was inconsistency depending on which part of the eel you got.
	Elska	Nathan	Fine dine	Really liked it, thought they were amazing. Wants to know availability.
	Gerards	Adam	Mediterranean	Cooked it over fire, some parts were good, the skin was a little too chewy for them. Good fat content

