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Around 52 per cent of people usually or always order seafood when they dine out on Sanibel Island. (Photo: Stock File)

Study asks whether restaurants can encourage sustainable seafood consumption



UNITED STATES

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The [Sea Around Us Project](#) has conducted a survey to find out if and how people who sat down in a restaurant without a specific dish in mind could be influenced to choose a sustainable option.



M.Sc. Student Leah Biery. (Photo: [searoundus.org](#))

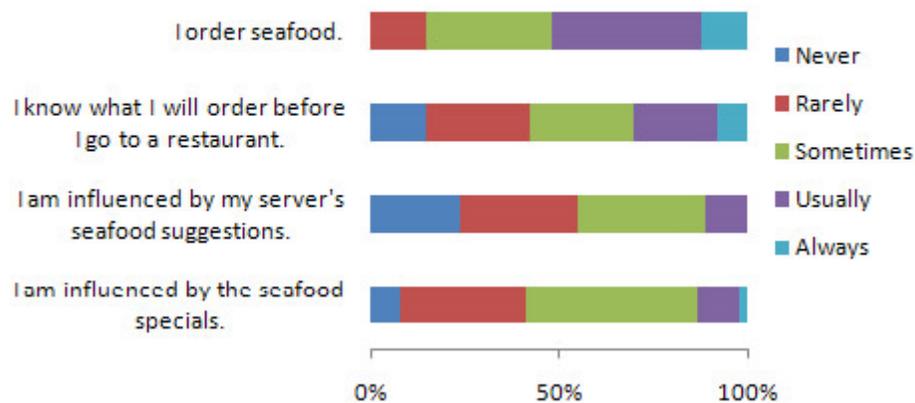
"When you dine out, how do you decide what to order? Do you head to the restaurant with a clear idea of what you want to eat, or are you influenced by the daily specials and suggestions from your server?" asked student Leah Biery, MSc, of the Sea Around Us Project to tourists in Southwest Florida's Sanibel Island.

Biery and a volunteer found that, of the tourists surveyed, 52 per cent usually or always order seafood when they dine out on Sanibel Island, and that another 33 per cent sometimes order seafood.

"This indicates that the local demand for seafood is high, so even a small increase in the proportion of people who make sustainable choices could contribute to the recovery of popular, rapidly declining species like grouper and queen conch," Biery wrote.

The team also established that 43 per cent of tourists surveyed rarely or never knew which seafood they were going to order before getting to a restaurant. Biery concluded that some of these consumers would thus likely be receptive to seafood recommendations from restaurant staff, and found that 45 per cent of respondents were sometimes or usually influenced by server suggestions.

When I dine out on Sanibel Island...



Next, 45.5 per cent said they were sometimes influenced by the seafood specials and another 14 per cent were usually or always influenced by them.

"Our results indicate that server suggestions and daily specials could potentially be used as effective tools for influencing diners to make sustainable choices," Biery said.

"As a means of boosting sustainable seafood sales and reducing the demand for red list species, sustainability initiatives could educate local restaurant management about sustainable seafood and encourage them to advertise only sustainable options as daily specials. Additionally, servers could be trained to routinely suggest sustainable options to customers," she remarked.

The team stressed that restaurants interested in operating sustainably could take a backstage approach by presenting the sustainable seafood products to customers as "delicious" instead of only sustainable.

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- [Global hotel chain embraces sustainable seafood](#)

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