



St. Jean's Cannery and Smokehouse facility, Nanaimo, B.C.

HOOKED ON SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

By Mary Del Ciano

Raincoast Trading is trying to save the world, one can of seafood at a time. The Vancouver-based company is taking steps to ensure that its business – producing gourmet canned seafood – supports the long-term health and stability of the world's marine ecosystems.

"We're committed to 100 per cent sustainability," says Kim Stockburn, sales and brand manager with Raincoast Trading.

This commitment sets Raincoast Trading apart, and leading conservation groups are taking note. The company's canned products – wild albacore tuna, wild sockeye salmon and wild pink salmon caught off the coasts of Washington, Oregon and British Columbia – were the first Canadian packaged retail products to bear the Ocean Wise sustainability logo, identifying them as an environmentally

friendly seafood choice. As well, Greenpeace Canada has named Raincoast Trading the number one sustainable canned tuna in the country.

Another differentiator for Raincoast Trading is the fact that its products are "clean label," with only two ingredients in its salted varieties (i.e., the fish and sea salt), while the unsalted products contain only the fish itself.

St. Jean's Cannery and Smokehouse, which owns Raincoast Trading, also uses special techniques in the cooking process to preserve the quality of the fish. The tuna, for example, is filleted off the bone and hand-packed raw into a BPA-free can, where it is cooked only once. This unique single-cook method preserves the tuna's natural omega-3 oils, significantly enhancing the health profile of the product and producing a flavour that is delicately delicious.

CAUGHT HOOK, LINE AND SINKER

Because global consumption of seafood continues to grow at a faster rate than various species can reproduce, Raincoast Trading supports efforts to minimize overfishing – the greatest threat to the oceans today, according to Ocean Wise. By working with conservation groups, the company ensures it's not sourcing a species that is endangered, or fishing in an area where stocks are low. "You're talking about something that will run out," explains Stockburn.

Raincoast Trading sources Pacific Northwest tuna from local, sustainably managed fisheries that use the hook-and-line method, a technique that targets the tuna and catches them one at a time, minimizing unnecessary bycatch (unintended catch that is discarded).

The company can back up all its sustainability claims because its products are 100 per cent traceable, from boat to can. There is a production code on the bottom of each can that identifies the exact source – the vessel, captain, harvest method, area of capture and trip dates.

WHY THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Sustainably caught and all natural come with a higher price tag. To justify the higher price to consumers and retailers, the company must educate them about the merits of buying sustainable canned seafood. Raincoast Trading recently rebranded, launching a new look for its products to enhance their shelf appeal. The new branding highlights that it's "not your typical can of seafood," and prompts customers to visit the company's website to learn why.

"I always believe that people will do the right thing, as long as they know what the information is," says Stockburn. "We hope that catching someone's eye with our new branding could make them go to the website [and] maybe we'll get one more person to understand the difference between sustainably caught tuna and conventional tuna."

The company is also launching a canned tuna product in early 2016 under a new brand – Raincoast Global. It will be sourcing skipjack, certified by the Marine Stewardship Council, out of the Maldives from a small

pole-and-line fishery. Skipjack is a less expensive tuna, which will allow Raincoast Trading to offer consumers a lower price point while still adhering to the same high sustainability standards.

Raincoast intends to find more sustainable species and fisheries, and add more affordable canned seafood options to its lineup in the near future. This, Stockburn says, will be the company's biggest source of growth.

But with every product it sells, and every new product it introduces, preserving the well-being of the oceans will always be the driving force. "Those standards of sustainability will never change," says Stockburn. "Ever." ■

RAINCOAST TRADING™

A WEST COAST STAPLE

Raincoast Trading was launched 20 years ago in Vancouver, and was acquired in 2013 by St. Jean's Cannery and Smokehouse – the very same company that had been smoking, hand-packing and canning Raincoast Trading's products from day one.

Based in Nanaimo, B.C., St. Jean's Cannery and Smokehouse is a family business that has been packing Pacific seafood for more than 50 years. In addition to its commercial fishery business, St. Jean's is B.C.'s largest sport fishing cannery and the only one in Canada that processes tuna.

