

Bringing the Seafood Chef into the Kitchen

By *Jeb Wyman*

When Japan stopped clamoring for sockeye and grounds prices dropped through the floor, the fishing industry belatedly turned its attention to the U.S. market. It soon became clear that middle America didn't buy much salmon because no one knew how to cook it. The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute fired up an educational campaign, sending fishermen ambassadors to grocery stores across the country, where they performed cooking demos and passed out samples of sockeye straight off the grill.

One company, Turner New Zealand, will soon do ASMI one better, harnessing the Internet's ability to broadcast on-demand video into the homes of would-be beef, lamb, venison, and seafood cooks. At the company's U.S. offices in Newport Beach, California, the final touches are being put on a studio kitchen. Celebrity chefs have already signed up to poach, sauté, and grill before a camera.

Turner New Zealand plans to incorporate the streaming-video cooking classes into its web site, which for two years has offered online ordering of gourmet, New Zealand-grown products. Those include a full sampling of seafood from the waters down under: green shell mussels, orange roughy, lemon sole, oysters, arrow squid, rock lobster, little neck clams, hoki, oreo dory. On the way: king salmon, scampi, and scallops. The high-end seafood, colorfully packaged and marketed with eye-popping photographs of exquisite dishes, is delivered to each customer's door. As other mail-order marketers have done, the company ships via FedEx in styrofoam bins and five to 15 pounds of dry ice, guaranteed to arrive frozen. Customers pay a uniform \$14.95 shipping fee on all orders up to \$200, after which it is free.

Turner New Zealand installed its own web servers to support the souped-up web site and streaming-video technology. The investment could pay off well. With video culinary demonstrations just a click away,

seafood lovers can watch a chef prepare calamari rings or green shell mussels. Turner hopes that customers, encouraged by the seeming ease of cooking seafood after watching the videos, will then order at home and wait for a box on the doorstep.

Turner has also tried to simplify e-commerce for its



Preparing gourmet calamari: Turner New Zealand will show you how.

customers. "We're trying to make it as user-friendly as possible," says Justin Suh, the company's graphic designer. "It takes just two clicks to go to the buying pages. Your shopping cart will always be visible; when you're not ready to purchase yet, you can save your cart." Suh has also compressed the graphics files so they load up swiftly.

Recognizing the interplay between image and sales, Turner New Zealand products arrive in four-color packaging, complete with recipes, product literature, and a small free gift. "Every time someone opens the package," says Suh, "we want them to have the 'wow experience.'"

Turner New Zealand is launching a home-delivery service in selected cities using a foodservice truck "wrapped in graphics," says Suh. The company also plans to offer on-site cooking classes as a way to promote its seafood and other products. 