

# FOOD AND DINING

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ETHNIC EXPLORER BY LINDA BLADHOLM



## A FISH TALE

# How a Boston bartender became a sought-after South Florida seafood supplier

Each week, seven to eight tons of some of the freshest seafood in South Florida pass through a pristine warehouse in Hollywood. Triar Seafood president Peter Jarvis inspects every order before it's shipped out by Federal Express. The fish's layover is just long enough for a nap on ice in a room kept a few degrees above freezing.

"You never know where your journey will take you," Jarvis says when asked how he got into the business. That would be from Boylston, Mass., where he grew up, to summers on Cape Cod and jobs as a ski instructor in Vermont and bartender in Boston. His last New England bartending gig was at the Bull and Finch Pub of Cheers fame.

Jarvis headed to Fort Lauderdale in 1980 for a job as a Hilton food and beverage manager, but was back to bartending before long at a local sports hangout. He got into seafood when a waitress asked him to manage a small start-up business delivering fresh fish and stone crabs by Fed Ex.

Jarvis called chef friends at the resorts he'd worked at in Vermont, and they ordered from him - and kept ordering, impressed with the quality. That was 20 years ago.

Jarvis and his wife, Suzanne, formed

Triar Seafood in 1991. The name means "try our," as in "try our seafood, not theirs," Jarvis explains.

The company buys from small day-boat fishermen, and every catch is examined by staff inspectors. Clients include star chefs like Charlie Trotter and Rick Bayless in Chicago and Norman Van Aken in Coral Gables. A few years ago, Triar began supplying chefs at James Beard House dinners in New York.

Fish cutters James Lee and Danny Pierce have 45 years of experience between them. They wear layers of sweats and yellow rubber aprons in a glassed-in cutting room where 100-pound Gulf yellowfin tuna lie on the counter like little submarines. Lee deftly removes the huge backbones with a stainless steel blade and carves the garnet-colored flesh into trim loins and thick sushi-quality slabs.

Enormous Chilean sea bass are reduced to thick, pearly white fillets. They come from harvests turned over to a 24-country commission that is pursuing regulation of this popular fish. There's also Key West yellowtail snapper, pompano and South American corvina.

Through an Australian partner, Abel Gower, Jarvis brings in Tasmanian steelhead (ocean trout with rich, salmon-colored flesh) and trendy barramundi, a cross between wild striped sea bass and snook. Its aboriginal name means "large scales," as it is covered in shimmering, thumbnail-sized plates.

Barramundi is highly prized for its firm, moist, flaky white flesh. The mottled, silvery-black skin is fatty and flavorful, crisping like bacon and emulsifying flavor into a thick fillet. Barramundi is best steamed, poached or pan-seared, skin-side down and finished skin-side up in the oven.



"Mundi," as it is being called, is available at Lorenzo's Italian Market in North Miami Beach. Or head to Triar where it's available retail along with the rest of the day's catch. You won't be disappointed.

Triar Seafood, 2046 McKinley St., Hollywood; 954-921-1113; 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

## SALAD

### Barramundi Salad

2 pounds barramundi or sea bass fillets  
½ cup freshly squeezed lime juice  
1 ½ tablespoons palm or regular sugar  
4 tablespoons fish sauce (nam pla)  
1 or 2 small green Thai chiles, seeded and minced  
1 large red onion, finely sliced  
1 bunch cilantro leaves, chopped

Steam the fish fillets until they turn opaque, about 5 minutes. Cool and cut into bite-sized chunks; place in a large glass bowl. Combine lime juice, sugar, fish sauce and chile; pour over fish. Mix in the onion and cilantro. Chill and serve. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

**Source:** Mulataga Aquaculture.

**Per serving:** 238 calories (6 percent from fat), 1.7 g fat (0.3 g saturated, 0.2 g monounsaturated), 97 mg cholesterol, 42.3 g protein, 12.6 g carbohydrates, 1.1 g fiber, 1,518 mg sodium.

**CATCH OF THE DAY:** Above, Peter Jarvis and his wife, Suzanne, own Triar Seafood, which they formed in 1991. Chilean sea bass, above right, is packed on ice at the warehouse. At left, workers process Chilean sea bass and tuna loin.

