

All Salmon Are Not Created Equal

wild salmon

Wild Pacific salmon are just that: wild and **100 percent natural**. Evolving and adapting over millennia to the great rivers of the West, the wild Pacific salmon has no equal in nature. From the gravel where it begins as an egg, it emerges, feeds, grows and survives in fresh water until it's old enough to travel to the salt. At sea, wild salmon grow big, travelling often thousands of ocean miles before returning to its birth stream to spawn and die, restarting the cycle for another generation. Even after its death, the wild salmon provides a **nutritional boost** to nearly every living thing around it, from forests and ferns to bears and bald eagles.

farmed salmon

Confined its entire life to tanks referred to as “pig pens,” the farmed salmon’s life is essentially the opposite. Starting as an egg in an incubator then progressing from tank to tank, the farmed salmon dines on ground-up fishmeal pellets, pink **dyes, antibiotics and other medications** necessary to compensate for the lack of a natural diet and to avoid disease outbreaks common in such close quarters. Unlike the living legacy wild salmon leave behind, the salmon farm usually leaves little behind but a polluted plume in the open waters around it, **threats to wild fish**, and more local fishing boats tied up at the docks.

hatchery salmon

Hatchery salmon are a life-cycle **hybrid** of wild and farmed fish. Most start life in a plastic bucket as a mixture of harvested eggs and sperm. Much like the farmed salmon,

the first and early stages of the hatchery salmon’s life are spent in **incubators and concrete tanks** feeding on pellets. When the right age and size, they are released into open waters, with the hatchery operator’s hope that they will survive to return as adults to be caught. Hatchery salmon **enter the wild** without the benefit of the natural adaptations of wild fish. Lacking the instincts hard-wired into wild fish to help them navigate home, hatchery salmon often stray to random streams and interbreed with other genetically distinct wild salmon stocks, diluting unique adaptive traits in one generation that took thousands of years to evolve. Hatcheries can have a place in future salmon management, but only if we are able to **learn from and correct** some of the mistakes of past and current hatchery management.



SALMON FACTS

- > Number of salmon fry released from southeast Alaska’s hatcheries in 2004: **1.65 billion**
- > Pounds of farmed salmon harvested in British Columbia in 2003: **145.4 million**
- > Average number of farmed salmon contained in a single net pen: **10,000**
- > Percentage of restaurant consumers who prefer wild, ocean-caught seafood: **77**