

Trip Report for the 2018 Seafood Expo North America





**Trip Report for the
2018 Seafood Expo North
America**

Boston, Massachusetts

March 11-13, 2018

**An
AgriMarketing Project**

**Supported by
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada**

Pacific Urchins Harvesters Association

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Mike Featherstone, David McRae, Lawrence Anderson and Geoff Krause were joined by Melody Fan, Ed and Brenda Sang and Cliff Liu to represent PUHA at the 2018 edition of the Seafood Expo North America (SENA) in Boston.



Lawrence and Dave, Melody and Ed doing their thing at the 2018 SENA

We were again exhibiting as part of the BC booth, a facility provided by the BC government and used by a number of seafood producers from BC. The costs of exhibiting this way are a fraction of using a dedicated booth on our own and it comes with a number of other benefits including sample preparation, meeting space and tables, overflow traffic from and very good networking opportunities with other participating companies and generally lots of support from the government staff who are in attendance. The operation is put together by Marilyn Wright and Rob Arthurs, both of the Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology but stationed in Santa Clara California and Vancouver BC respectively. Rob is also key in setting up the BC booth at other seafood shows in China and South Korea.



Another constant and welcome feature of the BC booth is the presence and assistance of Nathan Fong, seen here with Marilyn and Rob. Nathan is a celebrity chef from Vancouver and unfailingly delivers creative and tasty seafood treats as he prepares samples for all the exhibitors in the booth(s) and distributes them to passers by and visitors. Experience has shown time and again that providing samples is a major draw to bring in visitors so providing the opportunity to develop an interest in the product and perhaps even in new business.

The show took place at the Boston Trade and Convention Centre between March 11-13, 2018. The Seafood Expo north America, or SENA, is North America's largest seafood exposition and is an annual occasion when thousands of buyers and suppliers from around the world attend the three-day exhibition to meet, network and do business. Attending buyers represent importers, exporters, wholesalers, restaurants, supermarkets, hotels, and other retail and food service companies. This year the show featured 1,341 exhibiting companies in more 258,000 square feet (24,000 sq. m) of exhibition space with more than 22,200 visitors in attendance.



The BC booth is separated from other participating provinces and regions from Canada by some distance and we are virtually on the other side of the show. The Maritimes and Quebec secured a prime location many years ago close to the entry point to the show and are unwilling to downsize in order to make room for the BC exhibit. It is kind of distracting to people who wonder why we are not part of the Canada Pavilion but it does not strike anyone at the booth as a big deal and some even see it as kind of fitting since we are similarly distanced from the other coast geographically. At any rate, we do our best to ensure everyone knows we stand out from the rest.



As can be seen above, our information cabinet was close to the chef's preparation area, extra counter space and to power. We also had our 2 red sea urchin models along, and we included the model cuke in our portfolio as well to see if it too might be of some interest. We brought along a laptop computer this year to run the movies so this was exceptionally fortuitous as our proximity to other counter allowed us to run that without overly cluttering up our own quite limited space. As anybody with kids knows, just having the videos playing attracts and holds attention while piquing peoples interest and curiosity enough that more opportunities to strike up a conversation almost invariably arise. This works well for us as we are looking to build interest and knowledge of our products that will hopefully lead to more business opportunities for our processors, exporters and distributors which will then cascade through to harvesters through price increases.



We also played up a bit of a misdirect on some of the show badges as a way to lighten things up a bit and get people into conversations. Once we noticed the "Titles" we were accorded we decided it was kind of fun and that a few chuckles were probably not going to hurt anyways. We were obviously not the only ones thinking that humour is often good medicine, but in our case it was mainly Mike taking a bow, which is something you can see he was having fun



with, which is understandable given the reason which becomes more apparent on closer inspection of his badge. He wore it well and carried it off with some aplomb.

There is still considerable interest in our product but we are for the most part still unable to chase down much business *per se*. This year we had a couple of new export capable firms looking things over and hopefully mulling over the potential opportunity of entering the business. One apparent problem with stable long term business relationships is a reluctance to increase prices even when or as the demand profile changes as a measure of trusting faith in each other. There is a certain amount of give and take on this of course as the buyer also commits to maintaining pricing when demand and sales are down, but when there is increasing unmet demand it does not seem reasonable to shut them out even when they are willing to pay substantially more.

At any rate, getting back to business, this was our third consecutive year at the show and our visitor numbers were up by about 30% over last year, albeit with a little bit lower average qualification score. As can be seen on the visitor logs on the next page, we were visited by 6 well to highly qualified buyers on the first day, only 1 on the second and then 3 on the third. About a

Day 1: March 11, 2018

Country	City	Business	First Name	Last Name	Company	Score	Website	Comment(s)
Canada	Brantford	equipment (T lo	Richard	Nguyen	Emerson Comm. & Residential Solutions	5.0	www.wemerson.com	T-monitoring and logging systems
US	Temple City (CA)	trader	Duke	Wang	US CICC International Group	5.0		
China	Yantai	trader	Summer	Li	Wantone International Corp.	3.0	www.yt-wantone.com	runs a long winded version of Flash takes forever to load
US	LA (CA)	trader	Ulises	Morales	International marine Products Ltd.	6.0	www.intmarine.com	traders, distribs, restaurateurs specializing in Japanese restaurant supplies
Canada	Montreal	distributor	Patrick	Fortier	NORREF: Une Division de Colabor	5.0	norref.colabor.com	a leading seafood distributor in Quebec
US	Hartford (CT)	trader	Jeffrey	Dong	Food Direct LLC	2.0		business card pretty useless
Japan	Tokyo	distributor	Scott A.	Ree	Gourmet Global	5.0	www.gourmetglobal.jp	trading and marketing co but does not apparently carry uni per se
New Zealand	Auckland	import/distr	Eric	Ly	ecly Ltd.	4.0	www.ecly.co.nz	import/distributor of Asian foods in NZ but does not carry any seafood now
China	Dalian	traders	Kun	Zhang	Dalian Chuanyang Int'l Trade Co. Ltd.	5.0	www.dlcygj.com	website again wants to use flash; set up meeting with GHMP rep
France	Tourettes sur Loup	importer/distrib	Ludovic	de Parseval	Aloha Seafood	6.0	www.alohaseafood.fr	specializes in frozen seafood
US	Sharon (MA)	journalism	Arlene	Mathes-Scharf	Kashrut.com	3.0	www.kashrut.com	kosher food journal and reporting
US	Miami (FL)	cruise line	Richard	Carbonell	Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.	7.0	www.rccl.com	wants frozen trays, supplier portal: www.businessinsight.dnb.com/rccl
Canada	Mississauga	distributor	Ryota	Katayama	JFC International (Canada) Ltd	5.0	www.jfc.ca	Japanese restaurant supplier
Canada	Niagara Falls	restaurateur	Mike	Langley	Tide and Vine	6.0	www.tideandvine.com	oyster/seafood bar & grill
Thailand	Bangkok	distributor	Chowaphon	Reangjit	Bluespace Seafood	5.0		also brought news of Thai seafood show in May of each year
US	Flushing (NY)	trader			Mikawa Express USA	4.0		
Canada	Toronto	distributor	Edward	Huang	Omakase Food Solutions	6.0		already buys from RBS, wants more volume
Canada	Vancouver	feed	Denise	Macdonald	Urchinomics	4.0	www.urchinomics.com	workign with Brian
US	Largo (FL)	distributor	Dan	Narmstien	Foodworks	3.0	www.foodworks.biz	webpage is a simple park, no details on business
China	Beijing	importer/distrib	Wenyu	Dong	Huimao Food Co. Ltd	5.0	www.huimaoshipin.cn	
Peru		trader	Francisco	Vera	internexos Global	4.0		
US	Torrance (CA)	distributor	Yuka	Ohtsu	Uniglobal USA	5.0	www.uniglobalusa.com	urch processor with operations in US and Mex, distrib a number of spp.,
Canada	Montreal	distributor	Julie	Zhang	Groupe Sunlong Inc.	5.0		looking for cukes and reds
Canada	Toronto	distributor	Ishan	Sinha	Daily Seafood	5.0	www.dailyseafood.ca	distributor looking for fresh RSU, 6 delivery vans in webpage pic
US	Boston (MA)	distributor	Joe C.	Chung	Pacific Seafood Corp	5.0		looking for frozen cukes and RSU
Canada	Markham (ON)	trader	Lucy	Li	Arctique Tradiog Inc.	5.0		looking for more cukes, currently buys off Paladin
Canada	Vancouver	e-app developer	Julian	Hawkins	Vericatch	6.0	www.vericatch.com	fisheriesApp = electronic reporting and fishing management platform
						4.8		

Day 2: March 12, 2018

Country	City	Business	First Name	Last Name	Company	Score	Website	Comment(s)
China	Weihai	trader	Walter		Weihei Boow Food Co. Ltd.	4.0	www.cnseafoods.com	mainly squid, capelin, mackerel and breaded seafood products for Japan
US	Rockville (MD)	service provider	Richard	Huang	Avendra	4.0	www.avendra.com	QA audits for hotel suppliers incl. BC seafood co's- a new and coming trend?
Canada	Richmond	broker services	Adam	Wheale	Kuehne + Nagel	5.0	www.kuehne-nagel.ca	cross border broker services, handled BC shipment to Boston this time round
US	Anaheim	trader	Victor	Choi	Northgate Trading	4.0	www.northgatemarkets.com	looking for RSU to trade with South Korea
US	Vancouver (WA)	distributor	Johnny	Anderson	Food In Season	5.0	www.foodinseason.com	ask: RSU for Oregon market (Portland mainly?) www is an e-tail order site
US	Nantucket (MA)	restaurateur	Rocco	Sorocco	CRU Oyster Bar Nantucket	6.0	www.crunantucket.com	high end restaurant, would like to intro RSU to wholesaler/distrib
US	La Puente (CA)	distributor	Eedward	Lee	Ultimate International Co. Ltd.	4.0		looking for some cukes
Scotland	Caithness	proc/distrib/trad	Pengbo	Zhao	Scrabster Seafoods Ltd.	4.0	www.scrabsterseafoods.co.uk	
US	San Carlos (CA)	distributor	Jeffrey	Su	Kiyoi	5.0	www.kiyoi-inc.com	looking for RSU for California
Singapore	Singapore	trader	Jason	Loy	Big Catch	4.0	www.bigcatch.sg	proc, trader & distrib of primarily tuna, ops in China, Thailand & Indonesia
US	Fountain Valley (CA)	distributor	Mitsuhiro	Hagita	Pesca Rich USA Inc.	5.0		imports from Chile, would like frozen from GHMP
China	Dalian	manufact-trader	Zhandong	Lee	Dalian Xirong Group Co. Ltd.	4.0	www.xirong.net.cn	mainly looking for cukes, but also perhaps RSU
US	New York	trader	Ming	Cheng	Royal Hunan Seafood Co.	4.0	www.royalhunanseafood.com	wholesale and import but urchins likely kind of new to them
US	Campbell (CA)	mariculture	Tim	Reed	Reed mariculture Inc.	3.0	www.reedmariculture.com	hatchery and ornamental aquaria supplies
China	Beijing	logistics	Chen	Yuan	Hongyuan Group Holdings Co. Ltd.	3.0	www.pekhongyuan.com	shipping and logistics
US	New York	trader	Diane	Chang		3.0		
US	Chino (CA)	packaging	Peter	Stevenson	ECO Food Pak (USA) Inc.	5.0	www.ecofoodpak.com	packaging supplier- meat, seafood etc. looking for froz prod for China
South Korea	Seoul	restaurateur	JJ	Park	Asian Kitchen Group	2.0		infected website-
South Korea	Seoul	restaurateur	Hyun Jae	Seo	Asian Kitchen Group	2.0		Warning: infected website
US	Flushing (NY)	trader	Sean		Qun Sheng Trading Inc	4.0		no email, only Wechat: sean19880826
Canada	Richmond	processor	Gene	Carpenter	Blundell Seafoods	5.0	www.blundellseafoods.com	SU- fresh and frozen- seeking? or supplying?
Canada	Richmond	processor	Rob	Kaleks	Blundell Seafoods	5.0	www.blundellseafoods.com	
Canada	Vancouver	broker	Peter	Wei	Calkins and Burke Ltd.	5.0	www.calbur.com	RSU and SC
China	Shanghai	importer/distrib	Lucy		Greenland Group	5.0	www.glcp.com.cn	
US	Newton (MA)	trader	John	Lee	Wings Trade	4.0		
US	Hanover (MA)	e-tailer	Steve	Iai	Mr. Ocean Seafood Corp.	5.0	www.mroceanseafood.com	e-commerce site for abalone and sea cucumber
US	Phoenix (AR)	restaurateur	Jerry	Wang	Lins Grand Buffet/Lins Distribution Corp.	4.0	www.linsrestaurant.com	RSU into Arizona
						4.2		

Day 3: March 13, 2018

Country	City	Business	First Name	Last Name	Company	Score	Website	Comment(s)
US	New York	trader	Peter	Yang	Blue Venture	5		looking for supply into NY
US	Chicago (IL)	distributor	Kyle	Gu	True World Foods	6	www.trueworldfoods.com	
Canada	Richmond	custom freezing	Minoru	Nagaoka	Azuma Foods (Canada) Ltd.	7	www.azumafoods.ca	having trouble sourcing product to freeze, esp. alum free for EU etc.
US	Santa Barbara	wholesale	Laszlo	Nemeth	Santa Barbara Fish Market	6	www.sbfish.com	fish market looking for live and possibly processed product
US	Flower Mound (TX)	distributor	Hiroshi	Sai	Texas Mutual Trading LLC.	5	www.lamtc.com	looking to import uni into the US
Portugal	Lousa LRS	distributor	Eduardo	Vieira	Fumadis	5		looking for product into Portugal, possibly GHMP France.
US	El Monte (CA)	trader	William	Kien	Supreme Trading Co..	5	www.supremetrading.net	looking for frozen product for import into US
Canada	Vancouver	finance	Christophe	Vincent	Western Union Business Solutions	3	business.westernunion.ca	
US	Branch (LO)	retail distrib	Michael	Früge	Früge Seafood	4		looking for product into Texas
Canada	Toronto	restauranteur	Patrick	McMurray	The Ceili Cottage	5	www.ceilicottage.com	

5.1

Brochures and other give-aways SENA 2018

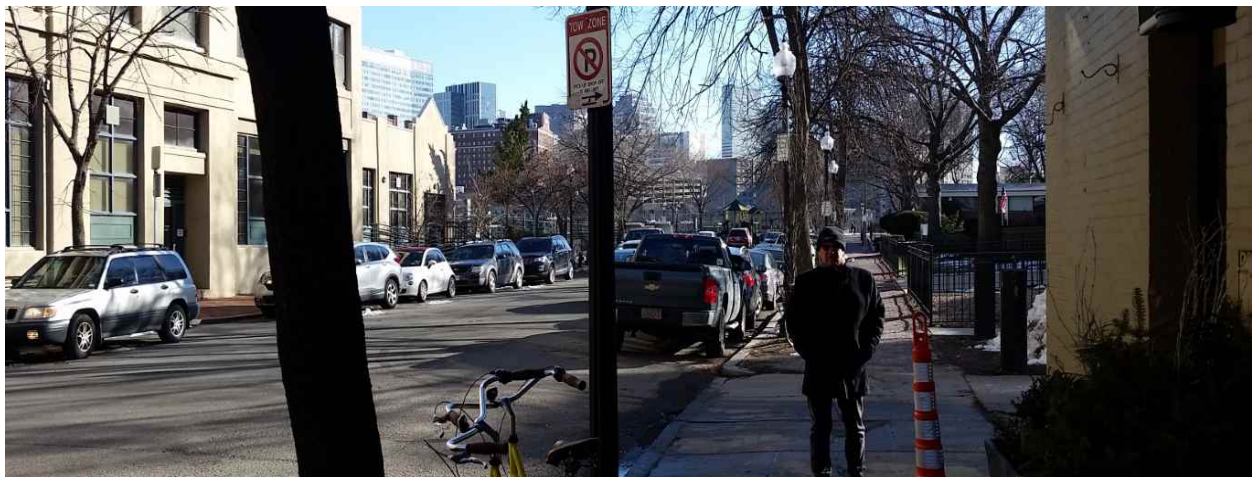
Item	Requested	Supplied	Plus	Day1	Day2	Day3	Used	Returned
PUHA DVD #1 (Mand, Cant & Engl)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PUHA DVD #1 (Japanese + English)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PUHA DVD #2 (Mandarin)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PUHA DVD #2 (English)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PUHA Brochures: traditional*	25	28	0	6	17	5	28	0
PUHA Brochures: simplified*	50	50	0	20	15	5	40	10
PUHA Brochures: English	250	250	0	47	33	8	88	162
PUHA Brochures: Japanese	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	15
Uni samples (grams)	1,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Smoked salmon (g)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PSCHA Brochures: simplified	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PSCHA Brochures: English	50	50	0	23	20	7	50	0
Company Brochures		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B'cards (250 for MF, DM, MH and GK)		1,000	0	not	tracked			
Pens	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Year to Year comparative summary metrics for SENA

	2018			2017			2016		
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
# of visitors qualified	27	27	10	23	11	10	31	14	9
% for show	42%	42%	16%	52%	25%	23%	57%	26%	17%
average score	4.8	4.2	5.1	5.35	4.35	4.8	6.39	4.86	5.78
non N. American	29.6%	29.6%	10.0%	30.4%	36.4%	20.0%	9.7%	28.6%	55.6%
USA	33.3%	55.6%	60.0%	43.5%	18.2%	50.0%	54.8%	50.0%	22.2%
Canada	37.0%	14.8%	30.0%	21.7%	45.5%	30.0%	22.6%	21.4%	22.2%
Brochures									
- traditional	6	17	5	5	20	13	0	0	0
- simplified	20	15	5	10	5	5	0	0	0
- English	47	33	8	85	50	50	110	65	48
- Japanese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total- all languages	73	65	18	100	75	68	110	65	48
% for show	47%	42%	12%	41%	31%	28%	49%	29%	21%
# brochures/# visitors	2.70	2.41	1.80	4.35	6.82	6.80	3.55	4.64	5.33

quarter of our visitors were from Canada, a quarter were from parts of the world other than North America and about half were Americans, a third of which were from California. The distribution of brochures did not follow the same pattern, and the uptake of them seemed lower than we have seen in previous years - as can be seen on the last table (Year to Year summary metrics). The big change this year seemed to be the higher numbers of visitors on day 2. The two previous years saw Day 2 numbers coming in at about half of Day 1, whereas this year they stayed steady, for whatever reason. It is probably worth noting that our little experiment with Sea Cucumber brochures showed that there does appear to be some interest in the sea cucumber in the US. 13 of our total 64 visitors were solely interested in sea cucumber while 5 were interested in both urchins and cukes. 11 of them showed up on Day 2 suggesting they may have had an effect on boosting our numbers.

The third day was interesting because the city was hit by a Nor'easter (blizzard) that dumped about 15" of snow on the city overnight and quite a number of people had bailed out the day before to avoid getting caught in the projected flight delays. The scene around our hotel went from looking like the first picture below on the morning of the second day to looking like the second picture by midnight. It did not help that coverage of the storm on the local TV stations was more than a bit over the top but the storm turned out to be not a very big deal despite the frenzy on the tube. We flew the next day as planned and actually got out on an earlier than scheduled flight because so many had taken off the day before.



All did not go entirely to plan on this year's mission to Boston. The main glitch we ran into this time around centred, perhaps unsurprisingly, on complications on the customs front. We did not manage to get any product to the show to sample because of a newly enforced rule that was being applied at the border so the following can be looked at as a bit of a head's up for anyone shipping to the US. Legislation introduced in 2006 federally to restrict the import and/or export of sea life to/from the United States as a measure to fight IUU product and the continuing illegal trade in seafood. Commercially fished products were given exemptions in the legislation but the government dropped the ball and did not recognize sea urchins, or sea cucumbers for that matter, as fish or shellfish which meant they are not included on the exempt species list. This was not an issue until about 2012 when someone, probably a young keener, noticed the rule on the books and started making a big deal of it and harassing shippers.

The first to be hit were US companies shipping to Asia and they immediately moved to get the problem fixed. Pressure from California and Maine in particular led to the development and introduction of policy and legislation in both the house and the senate to correct that oversight, but the legislative session ended in late 2016 before it actually passed so the two bills were not reconciled. This means the process has to start all over again - and of course there are bigger issues consuming Washington these days that are keeping attentions elsewhere.

So the upshot is that a permit from Fish and Wildlife is required to ship sea urchins and sea cucumbers across the border either way. The permit costs \$96 US per shipment, no matter what its size, but paying that eases the inspectors concerns, well assuming all the paperwork is in order. We had product from Grand Hale at the broker ready to ship but this little gremlin reared up and threatened to hold up the whole BC booth shipment, so the uni was pulled out and returned to Grand Hale.

Interestingly we also heard, again perhaps, that shipping product into the US by truck is a generally much better and more dependable option than using air freight, despite the time (potentially) saved by air. The fact of the matter is that all air shipments landing in the US require an FDA inspection, whereas the vast majority of truck shipments pass through without said scrutiny, at least to this point. Once it is across the border it can then be loaded onto a plane and shipped without triggering the inspection requirement.

There was another insight of note that came up in one of our discussions we had with some guys from California. They are still having a hard time with their production as the kelp is still only coming back slowly- they took a big hit during last year's El Nino and a subsequent explosion of purple urchins is holding back the regrowth of many of their Bull kelp fields. This was not any surprise as we have been following the story but we, and they, had been hoping for, and expecting, a quicker recovery after the last bout of El Nino. The upshot is that this chain of events is holding the reds in check and they are continuing to look for new supply and are definitely interested in BC product.

The insight I mentioned is in regard to the salt content of water used to process, pack and possibly condition urchins. They mentioned that when they were extracting and then wet packing uni in salt water they used water with a salinity in excess of 3.5 - 3.6%, or as it is more commonly expressed, 35- 36 ppt. (Parts Per Thousand). Using water with this salt concentration helps harden the uni by drawing water out of the gonad osmotically. It also moderates the expression of the fluids seen when the animal is getting closer to spawning. This is particularly interesting in the BC context because the average salt content of ocean surface waters around BC

varies from about 32 ppt on the open coast to something closer to 27 ppt for the inside waters of Georgia Strait. Places like Departure Bay get down to the low 20's, or even high teens when there is a lot of rain in the area, while better mixed areas like Porlier Pass and Active Pass can similarly get down to the low 20's. The same can be expected on occasion on the North and Central Coast during wet stormy weather.

This logically is going to affect the quality of the urchins and is likely behind the observations that uni from the south coast is “softer” and ripens more quickly than uni from the west and northern coasts. It also ties in with the changes in the uni as the gonads ripen and the animals get ready to spawn which normally just happens to normally coincide with the spring freshet which triggers the spring bloom and facilitates an abundance of food in the water for the larvae to survive and/or thrive on. A reported absorption of water by the gonads as part of this process suggests the urchins may have a certain sensitivity and permeability to salinity conditions which in turn suggests that holding the urchins in highly saline water could extend the effective season for urchins from various areas, or at least make them more resilient in transport as the season gets later. No guarantees on this - but it is something that could be easily evaluated experimentally. It could also open opportunities for cracking and wet-packing to reduce shipping costs from places like Haida Gwaii, assuming processors in such areas would be able to undertake such operations.

At any rate, the show wrapped up and was generally acknowledged a success. We feel the trip was definitely worthwhile because the market(s) there still hold considerable potential. The same would appear to hold for BC sea cucumber. All returned home safely and gratefully secure on our local knowledge that no matter what others might say, our west coast really is the best coast.

