

# Fishery doing business in Cambridge is catch of the day

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Cambridge —

On a recent Tuesday afternoon, many shoppers wandered through Harvard University's farmers market to find a crowd of people gathered near the back of a white box truck.

"What are you selling?" called out Maura Kelley, a Harvard Law School employee. "It's a fish share," yelled back one of the guys in the back of the truck.

Cape Ann Fresh Catch is a Community Supported Fishery — CSF for short — based in Gloucester that has eight drop-off points in the Boston area.

The drop at Harvard's farmers market is the largest. For a fee, CSF members receive fresh fish every week for 12 weeks. The fish are caught that day, weather depending, and packaged by weight for each member.

"How do you get in the program," Kelley asked. She will try to be one of the CSF's newest members when it begins a new distribution cycle in the coming weeks, she said.

Current CSF members lined up at the back of the truck with their ice chests and bags in hand, gave their name to Sarah Olivo — a member who works for MIT's SeaGrant — and obtained their choice of whiting and yellow tail flounder, taken together, or cod.

"People were very afraid before doing this; now people are empowered by it, conquering something new," said Olivo, also in charge of educational outreach.

The current 12-week cycle is in its third week. It is the first in the area, and the goal is to get 100 participants in the first round. The CSF has about 760 shareholders.

"People are learning that fish come with scales and all in one piece, not just the fillet you see in the store," Olivo said.

Many members stayed around the truck a few minutes more to see Steve Parkes fillet a flounder. Picking up a whole fish, Parkes asked, "We have a tradition in Gloucester to kiss the fish; anyone want to do it?"

Drawing laughs from the gathering crowd, Parkes began the filleting process.

“Just relax and don’t let the fish win,” Parkes said. “We’re not getting paid to do this professionally, so no one cares if it takes you 10 to 20 strokes to get this fish open.”

Parkes uses a Dexter Russel knife and claims that filleting is “70 to 90 percent; well, really 100 percent is having a sharp knife.”

“I’ve watched a lot of videos, but I’d like to see it up close,” said Bruce Barrett, a Waltham resident who works in Medford. Barrett was not confident he would be able to fillet his flounder, but he seemed eager to try.

“It’s quite a cool concept; if you go to a fish market, it’s three or four days old; here it was caught today,” Barrett said.

Many members share their weekly catch with roommates or friends. Theresa Smith and Katherine Eeaty of Somerville were eager to try two new kinds of fish: flounder and whiting. The first week, they brought home a large cod.

“We rocked,” Smith said. “You just don’t experience fish like that ever.”

“Our boyfriends were standing back, afraid to participate in the cooking,” Eeaty added.

Fresh fish makes many CSF members happy, like Debby Sommer a Cambridge resident. Sommer uses all parts of the fish she receives, even the fish carcass to produce fish stock and fertilizer to feed her tomatoes.

“The only problem is there aren’t standards for how the fish are caught,” said Sommer, concerned about other animals unintentionally caught in the fishing nets. “But I’m going for local, and I know it was handled well and caught today.”

“Fishermen are taking all ground fish, cutting down on by-catch, they stay closer to shore, use less gas and overall, the environmental impact makes a difference,” Olivo said about the Cape Ann Fresh Catch operation.

Fishermen in Gloucester are usually forced to catch specific animals that receive the highest market values, leading to overfishing of certain species. The CSF ensures that fishermen get a steady wage for whatever comes up in their nets. Olivo reminds members that “it’s called fishing, not catching.”