

Harbouring the truth

The iconic little harbour of Kalk Bay on the Cape peninsula's False Bay coast seemed a fitting place to contemplate the enormous issue of sustainability within the oceans worldwide so that's where I went. Actually, it's the place I go to contemplate most things. I've walked up and down that pier so many times that I'm on intimate terms with every crack in its surface. Food Editor **Mike Bassett**. Photography by Mike Bassett.

Over the last decade I've really started to pay attention to the fishing industry – as have many other people who are equally concerned about the diminishing seafood stocks worldwide. Some of the material available makes for scary reading: such as the commercial fishing industry will collapse worldwide by 2048 if steps are not taken to improve aquaculture. That's a hard fact to swallow. When I hear that only two species (yellowtail and snoek) are properly managed and that 15 well-known fish species have collapsed in South Africa I get more than a little edgy.

Being fond of the place, I'd researched a little history on Kalk Bay some years ago when I cooked from the harbour restaurant for my best friend's wedding. I have some pretty romantic notions about the harbour in general, not just because of that wedding which began on the breakwater I know so well – and watch it closely. I still occasionally do some consulting work at the restaurant there.

Kalk Bay was initially established in the 17th century as a community of lime burners who extracted lime from shellfish

deposits. The lime was essential for building construction. The name of the harbour was derived from the Dutch word for lime – kalk. In 1795 the Dutch sited a small military outpost there and after 1806 it started to flourish as a fishing village.

In 1840 a Philippine ship was wrecked off Cape Point and the survivors settled in Kalk Bay, adding to the community. Over the years they were joined by other Filipino sailors as well as emancipated slaves from the East Indies. They were Catholic but a Muslim community also developed when the Malaysian community settled there.

Already a sought-after venue for wealthy Cape-tonian businessmen, the settlement at Kalk Bay gained further impetus when the railway arrived in 1883. This vital transport link brought the crowds and aided the further development of the fishing industry. Cecil John Rhodes was the most famous personage to boast a holiday cottage

along the coast nearby and is remains a museum to this day.

Kalk Bay became a municipality in its own right in 1895 and non-fishing families were encouraged to settle in the area. This brought increased services to the area and the community began to change. The extension of the railway line to Simonstown in 1890 had a major impact on Kalk Bay. The tracks cut through the middle of fishery beach. This meant winter storms smashed half the fishing fleet. A new harbour was

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constructed to safely house steamboats and other vessels. The positive aspect of the railway line meant that fish was railed all the way to the markets in the Transvaal and the then booming diamond town of Kimberly.

Opposite clockwise from top: Kalk Bay harbour breakwater doing what it's supposed to: protecting the fishing craft from massive storm swells and rogue waves. The brightly painted wooden vessels which set out for fewer and fewer fish from False Bay waters. Streamlined for speed, freshly-caught snoek on ice.

Kalk Bay is also one of the last remaining working harbours with a fishing community in South Africa, proud of its heritage. It's also the only place in the country to successfully oppose the Group Areas Act under the apartheid regime.

So if you didn't know that little bit of history, I'm happy to have shared it with you. Its history and heritage need preserving –

just as its future need protection. It has saddened me deeply over the last few years to hear the local fisherman banter over days gone by and how good catches used to be. The number of boats and fishing crews has dwindled, as have the number of colourful fisherwomen who'd happily scale and gut yellowtail and snoek with deft flicks of razor-sharp filleting knives.

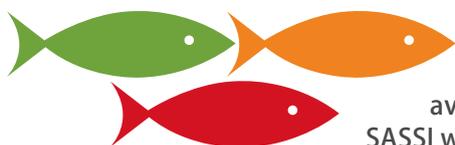
One hardly ever hears good news anymore or sees the kinds of catches offloaded in the old days. And when I say old days, I mean a decade or so. When I started cooking I would go to Kalk Bay and buy the most amazing fish. But sadly no-one made a peep about sustainability two decades ago.

I don't want to lose that piece of our heritage because of overfishing and a lack of care or simply greed. I want to be able to stroll through the harbour and see the colourful vessels with names displaying how much the fishermen respect their craft. The old Kalk Bay hands swear by the wood constructed boats for reliability and performance and no-one can argue that they don't lend a charm to the harbour that

It's sad no-one made a peep about sustainability two decades ago



GREEN - BEST CHOICE	ORANGE - THINK TWICE	RED - DON'T BUY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaskan Salmon Anchovy Angelfish Atlantic Mackerel Calamari (Squid) Dorado Gurnard Hake Herring Horse Mackerel Maasbanker Mussels Oysters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abalone Atlantic/Norwegian Salmon Cape Dory Carpenter Catface Rockcod African Sharptooth Catfish Englishman Geelbek/Cape Salmon Hake Hottentot Jacopever King Mackerel Kingklip Kob 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Musselcracker Poenskop Dageraad Kob Red Steenbras Red Stumpnose Miss Lucy Scotsman Sharks Tuna White-edge Rockcod Yellowbelly Rockcod
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pango Portuguese Sardines Queen Mackerel Saiter South African Sardines South African Snoek Tuna West Coast Rock Lobster Yellowtail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monk New Zealand Kingklip Ling Pangasius/Basa Prawns Red Roman Sharks Skates and Rays Slinger Sole Swordfish Tuna White Stumpnose Yellowtail 	<p>NO SALE SPECIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baardman/Belman Blacktail/Dassie Brindle Bass Bronze Bream Cape Stumpnose Galjoen Garrick King Fish Knife Jaw Natal Stumpnose Natal Wrasse Potato Bass River Snapper Seventy-four Spotted Grunter West Coast Steenbras White Musselcracker White Steenbras
*See www.wwf.org.za/sassi for details	*See www.wwf.org.za/sassi for details	*See www.wwf.org.za/sassi for details



Text the name of the fish to the number 079-499-8795 to get an immediate response telling you whether to tuck in, think twice or avoid completely. For more information about SASSI, you can visit the SASSI website at www.wwfsassi.org.za. Or email SASSI at sassi@wwf.org.za.

has rightfully seen this spot marketed as a “must see” destination for tourists.

The thing is that most people feel an affinity towards their heritage and their surroundings but are also motivated by the desire to have more, earn more and enjoy more but this comes at a price and the cost is certainly becoming enormously evident in the changes we see in the world. We just can't keep taking without repercussions. It's there to see in the lack of variety of linefish on every single restaurant menu nowadays!

The consolation is that there is a guiding light in the form of the SA Sustainable Seafood Initiative (www.wvfsassi.co.za) and so much is being done that hopefully we will manage to stem the tide. At least we're aware of the problems being faced and hopefully more and more people will do the right thing to contribute towards solving the issue of sustainability.

If I have to give up or sacrifice some of my favourite things, I'm willing to do that in order not to lose everything. 🙏



Think twice - King Mackerel

How can i help?

As a consumer you have a very loud voice. The more you learn and hear about the dwindling fish stocks and the damaged oceans the more likely you are to speak up. Look out for labels on fish that you buy telling you where and how the fish was caught. Visit the SASSI website to find out which species are commercially viable, which are under threat or highly endangered. And if you come across a so-called red species on a restaurant menu, ask the manager, chef or owner where he sourced his fish. It's by taking small steps such as these that you can make an individual difference.

SOMETIMES ALL YOU NEED IS A LITTLE SPACE.

myoga relax - eat - revive

Luxury fusion cuisine nestled
in the spacious gardens of the
Vineyard Hotel and Spa