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**LOCALLY FARM RAISED CLAMS BECOME FEATURED
SEAFOOD ITEM FOR SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD EDUCATION PROJECT**

Success of Wreckfish Campaign Leads to Addition of New Species

CHARLESTON, SC – September 3, 2003— Due to the overwhelming success of last year’s featured seafood item—wreckfish (*Polyprion americanus*)—partners in the ***Sustainable Seafood Education Project*** will be encouraged to showcase and promote a new locally raised sustainable seafood item—farm raised clams (*Mercenaria mercenaria*). Last year during the initial launch of the program, local chefs took a financial risk and made a commitment to the project by serving wreckfish, a less popular seafood item. The end result was delicious and guests were pleasantly surprised. FISH restaurant now offers four dishes that feature wreckfish on its main menu and several other chefs, including Robert Stehling of Hominy Grill, feature the species whenever possible. “By showcasing and cooking a local seafood item, chefs are not only supporting the local seafood industry, but they are adding a local dish to their menus, which is always a benefit for our guests,” stated Peyton Smith, executive chef at FISH.

Farm raised clams are grown in lowcountry inter-tidal mud flats by companies such as Blanchard Seafood in Mount Pleasant. Growing each clam takes approximately two and a half years to reach high market quality and can be harvested all year. The process of raising clams begins with the production of small seed clams in a land-based hatchery. Once the seeds are about six months old, they are placed in the field nursery where they will continue to grow for eighteen to twenty-four months until they reach market size. Blanchard Seafood can harvest 20,000 clams a day with three to four skimmers and the company is currently developing a brand name for marketing the product—**Stella Maris Premium Clams**, which stands for *Star of the Sea*.

The owner of the company, Tony Blanchard, began raising clams thirteen years ago and has seen success for sales of the product in areas like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Some area restaurants such as Coast, 39 Rue de Jean and J. Bistro have featured these clams on their menus and both Lowcountry Lobster and Crosby Seafood sell the product. “Because our clams have developed a reputation for quality and appearance in the Northeast markets, particularly in New York City restaurants, we would like to see them featured more in Charleston,” stated Blanchard. “**Stella Maris Premium Clams** are the most valuable and perfectly sized clams, and we feel confident that local chefs could create a variety of options for their menus.”

In October 2002, several of Charleston's finest chefs and restaurants came together with the South Carolina Aquarium, the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League, Johnson and Wales University, and the University of

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Farmed Raised Clams Highlighted Local Seafood Item for Sustainable Seafood Education Project

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South Carolina to address the status of certain seafood species in the wild and, as a result, created the ***Sustainable Seafood Education Project***. The project was designed not only to educate but also to serve as a model for others in the seafood industry. Participating restaurants make every effort to obtain seafood from sustainable and, whenever possible, domestic and local sources. The restaurants have also pledged to remove Chilean sea bass, orange roughy, and shark from their menus due to concerns of the species' status. In honor of its one-year anniversary for the start of the program, the Aquarium will host a series of special events September 19-20 to promote the success of the project.

To learn more, contact the Aquarium at (843) 720-1999 or at www.scaquarium.org.

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**Sustainable Seafood Education Project
Restaurant Partners**

39 Rue De Jean
82 Queen
Al Di La
AW Shucks
The Boathouse Restaurants
Bocci's
Brasserie Des Amis (Renaissance)
Brett's
Brett's at The Wickliffe House
Charleston Chops
Charleston Crab House
Charleston Grill
Circa 1886
Coast
Il Cortile Del Re
Cru Café & Catering
FIG
FISH
Hank's
High Cotton
Hominy Grill
J. Bistro
McCrary's
Old Village Post House
Peninsula Grill
Sea Island Grill at Wild Dunes Resort
Slightly North of Broad
Sunfire Grill & Bistro
Tommy Condon's
Tristan
Woodland's Resort and Inn
Union Hall

Other Supporters

South Carolina Coastal Conservation League
Johnson and Wales University
University of South Carolina, Baruch Institute
SC Seafood Alliance