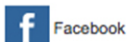




Light, buttery and delicately delicious: Okanagan sockeye is a definite must-eat treat in B.C.'s Interior. (CBC)

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West coasters might love their salmon, but many may not realize there's a delicious inland species caught in Okanagan lakes.

On the Coast food columnist Gail Johnson says Okanagan lake salmon can be found in many places, including Okanagan Lake, Lake Osoyoos and Skaha Lake.

She first tasted the Okanagan sockeye at Osoyoos' Watermark Beach Resort, where Chef Adair Scott prepared a charcuterie plate with warm olives and crispy crackers.

"The fish was ruby red in colour, smoked with cherry wood, and I have to say — delicately delicious," describes Johnson.

Part of the reason many people might not have heard of this interior sockeye species is because the stock became close to extinction in the mid-1990s.

Johnson met with Howie Wright, the fisheries program manager of the Okanagan Nation Alliance. The association was part of a coalition which spearheaded efforts to restore the sockeye salmon.

Efforts to restore the species have paid off.

"It took many years of hard work," Johnson explained. "At 2014, 490,000 salmon [passed] through Wells Dam, the confluence the Okanagan and Columbia Rivers in Washington."

The fishery is sustainably managed and proceeds from are reinvested into the alliance's programs to conserve native fish and aquatic resources within the Okanagan Basin.

Despite the low yield this year, Wright says it is far more stable now than it was several years ago, according to Johnson.

As for whether Interior sockeye tastes different from Coastal sockeye, Johnson says the "the flavour is more delicate than most sockeye. It's lighter and quite buttery."

In a way, it's just like wine.

"When we speak about wine we say the terroir will influence the flavour profiles of wine, like the soil it grows in will affect the flavour profiles. It only makes sense that fish will take on their own distinct taste depending on what route they take to the Pacific and back."

*With files from **On the Coast***