

# NATIONAL POST

## Seafood For Thought: Sealife meets seafood at the Toronto Zoo

Posted: June 25, 2009, 1:30 PM by Brad Frenette  
[Review](#), [SEafood](#), [Ocean Wise](#)

Last week, I was invited to visit The Toronto Zoo to feast on seafood. At first, I pictured myself, fishing pole in hand, trying to encourage some salmon up from the soon-to-be-unveiled polar bear exhibit. Alas, this was a far more relaxed affair, although I must admit there were some lingering question about how an event promising wine tastings, draft beer, oyster shucking, seafood and "live shark interactions" might go off.

Called "Seafood for Thought", the event was staged in the pavilion area around the zoo's new [Sharks at Stingray Bay](#) exhibit. And while it might seem odd, the confluence of seafood and sealife actually made for an elegant pairing.

As guests entered, they were brought into one side of the pavillion for drinks – beer courtesy of Steam Whistle and vintages Chateau des Charmes – as well as tastings by some of Toronto's top chefs. Featured at the several stations were the sustainable seafood creations of chefs such as Jason Inniss from [Amuse-Bouche](#) and Martin Koupric from [Pangea](#).



Guests were then encouraged to move, at their leisure, into the exhibit to (after a thorough rinse of the hands) to interact with and pet the sharks and stingrays. Needless to say, several expensive suits were splashed by the several playful (or annoyed) chondrichthyes.

From Stingray Bay, guests were brought into the final sectioned-off area of the pavillion, where they were treated to coffee, music and desserts, including a popular chocolate fountain.

Like any zoo experience worth its salt, this event mixed fun with learning, as Seafood for Thought also served to bring awareness to the problems of fishing done wrong, and one particular organization – [Ocean Wise](#) – which is working to encourage fishing done right. Ocean Wise is a conservation program initiated by the Vancouver Aquarium. The organization works with restaurateurs and vendors to provide resources on how to make - and thereby help their customers make – educated decisions about buying environmentally friendly seafood.

Patrick McMurray, a world champion oyster shucker who operates the renown [Starfish Oyster Bed & Grill](#) in Toronto was among the restaurateurs presenting sustainable selections at the event. He said he was eager to bring his oysters to the Zoo: "I've been involved with sustainable seafood, since we opened Starfish eight years ago, but just recently I have gotten busy promoting the fact that 'we' – as the top of the food chain – have to do something about the state of the oceans, as the supply of acceptable seafood is dwindling. Sustainable stock is the way to go. So when I was approached by Katie Gray of the Toronto Zoo, I was ecstatic. I'll help out any way we see how."

All in all, a fine event. The invitation only Seafood for Thought was billed as the first of its kind at the Toronto Zoo, and given how well it went with the patrons and chefs I spoke to, it would be a surprise if it were the last.



