

Dish Omaha – August 6th, 2025

Jeff: Time now for Dish Omaha featuring KVNO's resident foodie, Diane Watson. Good morning, Diane.

Diane: Good morning, Jeff. I would like to talk to you about tuna noodle casserole.

Jeff: Yummy. I love it.

Diane: I love it too. For me as a child, that was the extent of my palate for seafood.

Jeff: Uh-huh.

Diane: There just wasn't much available. I would say salmon patties and maybe fish sticks. How about you?

Jeff: The same. I love fish sticks with some ketchup.

Diane: Ew.

Jeff: I know. And McDonald's back in the day, for probably 25 cents, you could get a fish sandwich and it was so good.

Diane: It was so good. Thankfully, we had that as an introduction.

Jeff: Yeah.

Diane: But seafood in Omaha has changed a lot. And even though we're landlocked, we have a great number of options here. Now, historians believe fish were the very first creatures eaten by humans, probably because they're much easier to take down than a bear. Over 3 billion people now rely on seafood as their main source of protein. And in the U.S., fish consumption has gone up over 30% in the last three decades. So, the average American now consumes 20 pounds of fish per year. So that's about one fish meal. And if you think about people who don't like fish, you know, you and I are probably picking up their extra. In the Maldives, that's the highest fish-consuming country, 185 pounds of fish per person.

Jeff: Oh, my goodness. Wow.

Diane: So, in Omaha, there weren't, as I said, that many options in the 70s, but transportation really changed that. I was looking at the historic fish offerings, and I don't remember this place. I'm wondering if you do. The Ohio Fish Market?

Jeff: I don't.

Diane: It was on 16th and Ohio Street in North Omaha. It was there for 40 years under family ownership. They had live tanks for fish. Then they opened a dining room. So, it was really kind of one of the first dedicated seafood venues. The Dundee Dell was mentioned, too. That place opened in the 20s. And, of course, they popularized the fish and chips.

Jeff: Those fish and chips.

Diane: I still love it.

Jeff: The best.

Diane: And then I'm sure you remember Joe Tess's place. That opened in the 30s. I was surprised to learn it had been around that long. He was selling carp that he caught in the Missouri River in the corner of his bar. His wife would fry it up in a cast iron skillet. And they were open until just three years ago. And then, of course, there's Absolutely Fresh. I love this story. That place started in 1979. Greg Lindbergh was hauling fish himself from New Orleans in a refrigerated truck. And when he would sell it, people would say, "is this fish fresh?" And he would say, it's absolutely fresh.

Jeff: Oh, wow.

Diane: And that's how the name of the place was started. And, of course, now he expanded to Shucks and Bailey's. And he actually owned the Dundee Dell for a little while.

Jeff: And Shucks has a great offering for those who want gluten-free fish options.

Diane: Oh.

Jeff: Really awesome.

Diane: That's really good to know. There are lots of places to get great, fresh seafood offerings in Omaha. I looked at a few, wanted to share a few dishes with you. Plank, I think of, because I live nearby, is really a great place for oysters and raw crudos and types of dishes like that. But they have a pepita aji tuna and pasta verde. Pepitas are pumpkin seeds. So, it's got grilled pineapple salsa on bucatini pasta with pecorino and that pumpkin seed crunch. It's really delicious. Have you been out to Sandpoint?

Jeff: I have not.

Diane: It's relatively newish. They've won some awards. Their focus is New England type of seafood. But one of the dishes that's not so New England that I really like is the cataplana. It's a Portuguese seafood stew that has mussels, shrimp, clams, a little bit of chorizo, and it's nice and spicy. And then I'm sure you've been to Isla Del Mar in South Omaha at 36th and Q.

Jeff: I have not.

Diane: Okay. It's worth a visit. They've got a great fish selection with a Mexican flair. They offer live music, mariachis. You can get a whole red snapper with the head still on it. You can get grilled octopus, which really is a fun dish to try. They serve it with a zarandiada sauce. It's real smoky and tangy and a little bit spicy. So, you can try all kinds of things. I think they even have an enchilada with a manta ray. So different offerings that you may not see at the McDonald's fish sandwich. 3% of the population identifies themselves as pescetarian. So, if you don't want to eat so many meats, you can eat more seafood, shellfish. It helps with brain and cognitive function, lower inflammation, and good heart health. And, of course, sustainability is a big thing that people are talking about too, and you can trace the sustainability of your fish. So, let's go get a fish sandwich, Jeff.

Jeff: Sounds good. Or a fish taco.

Diane: Ooh, there you go.

Jeff: I love that stuff. Okay, Diane Watson, Dish Omaha. Thank you very much.

Diane: Thank you.