

The Conch Ep2CLangley-FINAL.mp3

Julie Kuchepatov [00:00:04] Hello, my name is Julie Kuchepatov, and I'm the host of this podcast, The Conch. We are excited to continue our journey with this podcast and talk about seafood and the ocean. And, most importantly, showcase the incredible women working in the seafood sector. Share their journeys, examine the challenges they face and the triumphs they've achieved. Today, we are amazed to have a very special guest joining us, Chef Charlotte Langley. Having a chef on the Conch is a dream come true because I grew up working in restaurants and I've made a career in seafood, so I'm excited to talk with another kindred soul about this. Chef Charlotte is from Canada's Prince Edward Island, Chief Culinary Officer and co-founder of Scout Canning, an advocate for sustainable seafood and the official Canadian Chef Ambassador to the Marine Stewardship Council. Welcome, and thank you, Charlotte, for joining me today on the Conch.

Charlotte Langley [00:00:56] Thank you so much for having me and what a lovely introduction, an honor to be here.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:01:01] Did I get everything right?

Charlotte Langley [00:01:04] Yeah, I was just listening to it, and it is very rare that you finally get to have echoed back your passions in a sentence. So that was a nice reminder that I'm doing what I love, which is great.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:01:15] That's amazing. So let's talk about doing what you love and what are you doing? So can we start with your backstory? Like, what road did you take to get where you are today? I'm really interested in hearing kind of your career path to this moment.

Charlotte Langley [00:01:28] Yeah, it's a funny one in many ways, and I often set up a conversation and saying things like, Oh, it's a happy accident, I find myself here. But as I continue to go down this path, I don't think it was an accident at all, and I feel very much like I am in the place I'm supposed to be, which I think is rare for some people, but very grateful for it. So I'll give you some background in myself and how I got to where I am. I was raised on the East Coast of Canada. And so what I would like you mentioned a very small province, the smallest one in the country. Beautiful, very focused on seafood, you know, very rolling hills, really gentle. And my entire childhood was, you know, 15 minutes access to the beach or the wharf. All the times I remember jumping in the water like I saw all the boats to leave in the morning, we would go down as well. It just jump off the wharf and it was just a beautiful, very simple childhood. And I'm an only child, so I end up getting quite a bit of attention from my parents because they're like, Well, you know, you're the only one. So like, what do you want to do with your life? Let's have fun. I have very creative parents. It kind of I mean, I was a very free range child. You would say that this sort of led me into sort of some categories that were more on the entertainment side of things like, you know, I was a part of youth clubs to a very young age. I worked at a skate park, an indoor skate park with kids, and I was like a junior president. I sort of like wanting to be involved in community, really sort of from a very young age. And the seafood part kind of came later. But what ends up happening is I was sort of 18 and graduated high school, and I am pretty good like friends are OK. But you know, it wasn't like university quality as I didn't know what I wanted to do. Like most of us don't, I was like university.

Like, What am I going to do in university at this point? So I sort of took a pause and moved to Ontario to sort of explore being an independent young lady. I ended up working in a coffee shop, as we do, but as that was like in a student hospitality space and food service space, I was like, I like the vibe here. Like, I like serving people and caring for people in this way. I think I need a treat like I need to do something. So I thought of like the three things that I love to do. I like singing, I like dancing and I love food. Food is in my family. My grandfather was a food entrepreneur as well. And I just said, You know what? I'm going to go to culinary school. So in Canada, there's a program called the Adult Retraining Program, and I want to do late start and try something new or this program does is it pays for 70 percent of your tuition and your living fees. So basically, they put you on employment insurance, and this is the only way I was able to afford to go to college. I didn't have a lot of money in my background and I wasn't working on coffee shop wages at that time were not that high. So, yeah, the retraining program allowed me to go back to school and since I was an islander, they wanted me to come back to PEI where there happens to be a really amazing culinary school after college. So I ended up going to culinary school and falling in love with the hospitality industry. The timing was really right and it was, you know, almost 20 years ago now that I attended College, the CiC, Culinary Institute of Canada. And a part of the program is between your first and second year colleges. You have to do a co-op or an internship like you have to practice your new trade. And I was looking at restaurants all across Canada. This was the era of the El Bulli molecular gastronomy vibe. You may remember that, darling, why everybody was making bubbles and foams and all this crazy stuff, and I was into that. So I looked at a restaurant on the West Coast of Canada, which no longer exists, but it was called C Restaurant like a big letter C, and it was a sustainable seafood fine dining restaurant. So I thought the menu was beautiful there. There's species that I never had access to in Prince Edward Island because, you know, Pacific versus Atlantic, different species live in different places. So I was like, Oh, I just crab, giant scallops like this looks really attractive, and I applied for the job and I got on the phone with the executive chef at the time, Robert Clark, and he was like, Well, I got two options, lady. You can either come and stage and work all the stations for free or we need to hire somebody for garde manger. It was like, what's garde manger? I really have no idea. And I was like, I'll take a paid gig. Thank you very much. And I showed up at the C restaurant maybe three or four weeks later. Nervous out of my mind, I threw up before I went to the restaurant. I was so scared because I had never worked in a restaurant like I'd never worked in a restaurant. But during that time, I ran garde manger. I learned so much. They challenged me in the ways that worked for me. Kitchen management can be not the best sometimes, but it was really great management. The chef de cuisine and the chef were super talented. They trusted me to try things out, and I ran with it and I fell in love with seafood. I was like, Oh my God. Diversity of species. The diversity of what you can make with them, like there's so many options here, and I started sort of honing my craft in that space. And that was like it opened my eyes to the sourcing. Well, there's just the farmers, the fishers, excuse me even more. And it's growing on that big community. And that's sort of like lead me where to I am today is caring for and nurturing that community that I started at a very young age and reached out to, and I still work on every single day. But yeah, that's the long version of that story

Julie Kuchepatov [00:06:35] That was really, really informative. I knew nothing about that. And of course, I should mention that you and I actually don't know each other that well, but we do direct message each other quite frequently on Instagram.

Charlotte Langley [00:06:47] I feel like I know you

Julie Kuchepatov [00:06:48] Yeah, I feel like I know you too. And so I want to talk about a few things that you said in that really great back story. So first of all, you mentioned C Restaurant, which I think is a shame that it's no longer there. So hopefully you said chef Robert? Yeah, Robert Clark. Robert Clark has gone on to do more things with seafood, but you also mentioned stage. And could you just explain what that is? Is that an internship?

Charlotte Langley [00:07:14] Stagiaire, yeah, yes, a fancy French word where I think this is the time of stage is coming to an end and it's where you basically work for free. Yeah, it's like an audition, right? Basically you can audition for a job and then if you need like you, you get the job. But I was like, I'm not staging. I need to get paid. Sorry. Right? As serious as I am, I need to be able to pay back the 30 percent from that support system the government gave me. There's still student loan in there.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:07:40] Oh yeah, and that sounds like an amazing culinary education that you had right in your own backyard, which is incredible because, you know, not many people have that opportunity, especially with, you know, having to pay for things and having that support from the I guess the government is really, really great.

Charlotte Langley [00:07:59] It's amazing. And they actually just reintroduced, for the Canadian listeners out there, they reintroduced this grant as well or this program as well. So they changed the names of it a few times. It was challenging to find the program still exists, which I think is amazing or encouraging people to get into different channels of the workforce and specifically focused on trades, not like university education, but college education. But it's right. It was amazing. It was an amazing program, and I'm very grateful that it exists.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:08:24] That sounds amazing. So tell me how you know, I mentioned in your very impressive biography that you are the Chief Culinary Officer and co-founder of Scout Canning. So how did you come about starting a fish canning business?

Charlotte Langley [00:08:40] I always like I, so like it's not the sexiest project, right? Like you can fish and like, Yeah, it's really amazing. OK. Interesting. I'm just going to talk with the Boston Seafood Show for a second. You've been there. I'm pretty positive of that. In a few years ago, I was there prior to COVID, and I was like walking around like, Hi, I'm out there, I'm canning fish. Almost everybody was like, What are you doing? I'm canning seafood, responsibly sourced seafood from North America, they're like, Are you crazy? Like, what do you mean? Like, we're moving away from cans, that's like old, archaic, gross. They were super negative about it. And I was like, Well, you know what, guys, if you're all moving away from the canning industry, guess what? That's exactly where I want to be going. I'm going to dove headfirst into that space because of many reasons. The background of getting to this point was I closed five restaurants. I got fired from one. These things happened. I got fired from one. One went bankrupt, one was going down and I had no idea. And restaurant after restaurant I was working in, they just kind of went to shit and I was like, the only common denominator of this entire category of all these things happening is me. So maybe there's something wrong with me and I can't work for people like am I that impossible to work with. I don't know. You know, you go through those moments where you doubt your value and your worth as much as you care about something. And I was a big fish in a small pond for many years cooking in Ottawa, Ontario. I moved to a larger city and was a small fish in a gigantic pond and really struggled for a couple of years. Like job, to job, to job and hustling the side gigs and whatever. So I

decided to do my own projects. It was like, I still love people and I'm not pissed off you guys. I'm just like trying to figure out the best way to share what I love with you. And it was the year of 2004, and there was 14,000 Mason jar recipes in every restaurant. And if you remember that you get a cocktail in the Mason Jar, salad in a Mason Jar. Mason jars were everywhere, I was like, OK, cool. Like, This is a cool trend and I love it. The art and craft of preservation. Totally down. The shelf life is only commercially, not that long. You know you're putting a mason jar in your fridge, or if you're canning at home safely and with proper techniques, your judgment to save those in your basement. But personally, that's only happened. Like, How do I get in more responsibly sourced seafood that's delicious, nutritious, responsible in people's homes where they can take me home? Literally, I want to go home with you. I want you to taste how much I care about giving you something that's delicious as possible from my heart and you just being like, Yeah, this is easy. I can handle this. I enjoy this. I like to call it the point of least resistance cuisine. You just take me home with you and I got you covered this cracking open and you're good to go. So I was like, I'm just gonna start experimenting. I found a canning machine. I found a piece of equipment, which is one hundred and six, now, this piece of equipment I still have at home. It's like a very archaic canning machine. It is a home canning machine, not commercial. And I just started exploring, it took me 10 months just to find cans that would fit and that would work with Chuck and used a lot of credit to buy these cans from Ohio. I had my partner at the time, like he brokered things through his company for me because I'm a Canadian, I was like, Oh, I'll order all this online, it'll show up. Not that easy to broker stuff across the border, especially when it's four thousand dollars worth of cans that you're just going to buy. And I just started like trying to understand how the art and preservation of fish, specifically how it works and how it can be improved upon and how it can be innovated. And that's how Scout was born through two years of experimentation and those side jobs and the hustles and all these things and hosting private dinner parties, you name it, engaging the community and asking for support to get Scout to a place where it felt like it could be a viable business. And fast forward to today, it is a viable business. As hard as it is, it's working and it feels like a miracle.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:12:37] I have to commend you, and I have to tell you what you said about losing five jobs totally resonated with me because I also funny enough, as in my adult career, I have had three jobs and I have been, as the English say, made redundant. Yes, each time, which I think is the worst phrase possible on the planet, but I think it's funny. So that's why I use it. But yeah, and so I also lost three jobs and jobs that I really cared about, and I also said the exact same thing you did. I said, I'm not going to work for anybody anymore. And so that's why I started SAGE. Honestly, I never had dreams of opening my own business or nonprofit. I still pinch myself a little bit and can't believe that I'm doing this. And now I'm sitting here talking to you. You're in Vancouver right now, but you're literally on the opposite side of the continent from me normally, and we have very similar kind of trajectories in the way that we realized that we still love people. And that's exactly my same thing. I love people and I want to serve people, but I also want to respect myself and do what I want to do. So, yeah, why not? Exactly. The Scout Canning story is really incredible, and I love the story about finding that piece of machinery and experimenting on it. That's a whole other podcast, probably in and of itself.

Charlotte Langley [00:14:05] Yeah, probably.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:14:07] I also think so, but I am interested. And you mentioned sustainable and responsible seafood several times, and I'm curious, how do you source your seafood and what kind of criteria do you use? Because I can't imagine and correct

me if I'm wrong, I don't know if your volumes are so large that it's feasible in terms of price. Right? So I'm interested. What kind of criteria do you use to source socially and environmentally sustainable seafood while also keeping in mind that tuna, or canned goods, canned seafood is definitely a kind of a niche product that has a very specific price point, which is usually very low, right? And that comes at the expense of

Charlotte Langley [00:14:47] it comes at the expense of slavery, bad practice, bad harvesting, poor fishery management. There's a whole lot of things that make a can of tuna cost 99 cents, and a can of tuna should never cost \$2. And that is a statement I stand behind and I will continue to talk about it until a can of tuna is five bucks.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:15:06] Right. So how do you balance that?

Charlotte Langley [00:15:07] As easy as this is to talk about because of the place in the category that we are in, it's also really hard for me because I'm not a marine biologist and I'm not a chemist. I'm a scientist. I am a passionate ocean steward. I do a ton of research and education regularly to feel like I'm a part that I'm learning, and I'm constantly engaged with what's happening globally in the seafood industry and this business, which is a huge business. And it feels like every day is changing. So initially, when it comes to sourcing seafood for Scout, you know, we look at a few things. Being the MSC Ambassador to Canada is one component. For our wild species, we work with the Marine Stewardship Council to manage and source our wild fisheries. When it comes to looking at species for Scout initially, I'm going, OK, well, these are the three species that I really love working with right now. One was mussels, one was trout and one was lobster. And the reason I chose those three species with my team is because one is an amazing, diverse, unique creature. They all are, but the mussels scenario, they clean water. They are very regenerative. They are delicious, they're highly nutritious and a little bit different. They also play along the lines of a classic European conserva. For example, you go to Spain and Portugal, you're going to see smoked mussels and escabeche and like all these beautiful flavors. That one harkens to me as the most European style and that we have as we make it. The trout, I was like, We need a species that people recognize. They're used to eating commodity canned seafood throughout North America. We're used to eating canned tuna, canned salmon. And that's kind of it. There's not a lot of diversity of species or flavor or quality. So I was like, OK, it's finfish, it's pink. The farm that we're working with, the food that they're feeding them is not based on spreading or wild animal feed. It's a mixture of different things, bloodmeal worms, all that kind of stuff. So it's not pulling from wild species for food, and that's a recognizable one. People love salmon. They know that's a classic American sort of flavor combination. Let's make sure that people are going to recognize and then lobster. That is a unique product. No one really has it on the marketplace, in a can. And it's delicious in the way that the lobster industry is managed is one of the more renewable fisheries in Canada because of how it's managed, 77 percent of the fisheries are certified by the Marine Stewardship Council and it's almost like gardening. I would like to say and liken it to gardening where they're planting. When they harvest the lobster in the boat, they're pulling them up and looking at them. They're identifying the size and the sex and the quantity of eggs their producing. And every female that's pregnant goes back into the ocean. Nothing is harvested for consumption. And that means that they're basically managing, helping support the species continue. And the quotas are relatively reasonable based on the species. And I feel that it's more like ocean gardening at this point versus going out and spearing a tuna is a bit less wild. It's almost bordering on getting into the cultivated space. So we chose those three species for diversity in species, recognizable something of that uniqueness and something that people

have never really seen before, and supporting the communities that harvest and/or grow these species. So, for example, being from Prince Edward Island. I really wanted to work close to home. I wanted to support the small town fisheries, the small processing facilities that are working with the renewable species that's being such responsibly harvested and cared for, like the mussels and lobster. And just working with them side by side. OK, how much water are you using for the lobsters to steam it to get it out of the shell before it goes into the can? Can we reuse this water? What happens with the shells afterwards? We turn that into a paste making oil. How are we going to be making sure we use every single drop of meat that's coming out of this product.. Also, I like to look at it as recycling before it hits the grocery store in the process of canning food. You know you, Loblaws or whatever grocery store and you have the fresh fish counter and you get like the chateaubriand of every cut, the central part, like the beautiful filets. Where we can can things before it even hits the grocery store that's delicious, amazing quality fresh out of the ocean. And it can sit in the cupboard for five years or longer. We're going to have a better quantity size product that gets a more controlled portion. You're not eating 40 ounces of lobster, you're eating two and you can have you can afford it, you can enjoy it, and there's no waste associated with it. So I feel that it's like this beautiful closed loop system working directly with the small fishers, communicate with them on a small scale. We're very small, not even close to the Bumblebee or any of those guys. Our production is relatively small, and yeah, we're working directly with them every day after you and I have this lovely conversation. I've got a call with Eric and Cheryl, the engineer and the quality control manager at Acadian Supreme, which is the plant we work with in PEI to talk about some product development and utilizing some more diverse species and building us some new tins for 2022 which is really exciting,

Julie Kuchepatov [00:19:59] Can you give us a hint at what a new species would be?

Charlotte Langley [00:20:03] Yeah, absolutely. I am really interested in working with more shellfish, and for example, there's a lot of clams. East Coast of Canada in the West Coast as well, and clams are really unique species to me because what happens with canning is that it gets cooked for a while and it goes into the tin and it goes through this process called TDT. And I always think this is like my dramatic pause before I say it's called thermal death time. It's internal time and temperature where the product has to be cooked for us for the food regulation standards to a certain temperature to make sure there's no sea bot or anything scary in there and clams really lend themselves well to looking for a long time when we first steam them and open they're nice and they pop and they're juicy and gorgeous.. And then they hit that point and they get tough and they get taken to the next level. They start getting tender again, so it's actually really a fun product to play with, and they're delicious. So, yeah, I'm looking at a few others in the mix and clams are one of them.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:21:00] That's awesome because I love clams. I think they're probably one of my favorites. So I will definitely be on the lookout for that. So let me ask you this question because I have been dying to ask this one. So you mentioned that you a couple of years ago, prior clearly to COVID, you were at the Boston Seafood Show, which is the largest in North America seafood show where all of us buying and selling and trade and learning, you know, there's conferences, et cetera. And meetings happen about seafood specifically for North America and that many people that you talked to shunned kind of the idea about coming back to canning and specifically canning sustainable or responsible seafood. So why? Because I've noticed clearly, I think it's very obvious. If you are paying attention specifically on social media, there's at least five that I can think of off

the top of my head, women owned specifically canned seafood or tinned seafood companies that have really kind of made an entrance in the past, I guess, year and a half, two years, maybe. Why do you think that is? I think it's such an interesting phenomenon, and I'm curious your thoughts.

Charlotte Langley [00:22:05] Well, you know what? I at first was super intimidated. I was like, What the heck is going on? I thought I found a category that nobody cared about, like, what is this? Where are all these people coming from? I was shocked and I was like, There's no way we're going to ever have competition like any craft artisanal cannery, like who the heck wants to do this stuff? I thought I was the only crazy one, but I guess I'm not. And now it's amazing because I never thought that a community would grow from this. And I'm not a specialist in marketing, and there's a whole bunch of things that I don't know in this space. And people are like, it's the Hot Girl Tin Fish Summer and like, what does that mean? I didn't know that girls like to sardines poolside with a margarita. Like, when did that happen? I've been eating them in the tub for years, but I think what's happened is that it's a space that we've made for ourselves. When I walked into the Boston Seafood show and I was talking about canned food, it was a sea of blue suits and I was like, Hi, I'm Charlotte Langley, you know, I'm passionate about this, and I basically told them what I want you, but short form, and they're like, You're crazy woman. Like, what do you mean I'm a crazy woman? But the thing with like canning seafood, preserving some fish this way, it's not just slapping onto a plastic container and shipping it to some port dock and to someone somewhere else. There's art and there's craft and there's care that's involved in producing these things. So I think that as a woman and as a chef, they give me the opportunity to build something that's like delicious, nutritious and responsible. Oh my God, this is a category where I can become creative. I can source the species in the can, whatever it may be, make it delicious, making it a little bit different. Make it my own. Brand it beautifully like, make it my flavor. My personality can come out just like a vessel of sourcing, a community story, being creative, something delicious. It's like a really great category, I think, for women, because it sort of hits all the things that I really like doing, like it covers all categories.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:23:57] I agree with you there. And the one thing that is super interesting that I recently read is and this is specific to aquaculture, and I think I've mentioned this maybe in the first episode of this podcast. I honestly can't remember. But in aquaculture, it's been well-documented that 70 percent of people working in aquaculture are women, and that's why it's a woman intensive sector. And you see a lot of women specifically in the East Coast working in seaweed production, a lot of women leading the development of that and innovating on seaweed production specifically as a type of aquaculture. And once the production becomes almost a profit center or it becomes something really viable, women will be pushed out. And so I'm wondering, you know, I will be interested to see if that happens with this canning phenomenon that is, you know, women like you are leading the resurgence and the innovation of this very special product. For those very reasons that you suggested, you know, because it's a form of artistic expression, it's a way to support your communities, it's delicious food, et cetera. And so once, if ever, you know, this becomes something that men of the industry will look at as a profitable venture, women again could be forced out, and I don't want to see that happen clearly. So I'm interested in seeing how that will evolve. But you mentioned community and I'm not talking in community in the sense of working with a community on the ground in the fisheries that you work with, but community of women working in the tinned seafood? And can you tell me a little bit more about what that community is like? And do you collaborate and what kind of things do you collaborate on?

Charlotte Langley [00:25:45] Yeah, absolutely. Well, also just to note that the plant Acadian Supreme, which is on the East Coast of Canada, the packers, all who can seafood, ninety five percent women just to support your information there. They're on the floor like they're the ones putting lobster in the cans. Yeah. And Cheryl's a bad ass QC manager, man, don't mess with Cheryl. Anyway, it's interesting because I think we didn't really realize that we were all working any sort of satellite projects simultaneously. And I mentioned previously I thought that I was alone in this desire. Up to 50 people tell you you're crazy. But I'm just going to keep doing it anyway whether you think I'm crazy or not. I don't really care. I'm doing this. And then all of a sudden you're like, Oh, there's another one of you. Oh, there's another one. And we do collaborate. We're starting to collaborate more. Before, it was sort of like a little bit like, you know, keep your cards close to chest. We don't really know what we're doing, and it's like you expose yourself like, Oh, look, I'm a seasoned thermal retort specialist that comes from years of university and training. But yeah, we do collaborations. And for example, they say a tide raises all ships, and that's how I like to think about working in this space together. As of halfway through this month, seems to me we're launching on the twelfth, and we'll be doing this big collaboration like a marketing campaign because it's a part of bringing awareness to the community and the consumer is doing these marketing campaigns and doing this big outreach to the public. And during this time, they'll be, there's actually 12 now. Now there's going to be the 13 days of Fishmas or I'm calling it 'Tis the Sea-son, and it's going to be highlighting 12 other brands besides Scout that are all working towards low carbon impact and renewable ocean projects and that are producing products. So, for example, Drifter's Fish from Alaska, is the husband and wife owned but she's sort of the face and the leader of their products. They make delicious, beautiful tinned seafood. The Fishwives are going to be collaborating with us. You're going to be collaborating with us. I'm really excited about to share this awesome podcast. I absolutely love it. The first one blew my mind. I was like, Because it's so good. I started actually DMing her on LinkedIn. Anyway, and we're all like helping each other sort of grow and bring awareness to this specific category of tin fish and also not just fish, but renewable energy projects. Like I mentioned, we are working with Akua, Neptune, 12 Tides, a lot of different seaweed-based companies and just people that like care and are working very diligently to make this work and do blue projects. It makes sense that help us have a bit more of access to species in the future and looking at the diversity of species and getting super creative with what we have. I'm impressed by all of these people and I'm excited to share this campaign. So yes, 'Tis the Sea-son will be launching in a couple of weeks and we'll get to highlight some other amazing partners in the space, primarily a good chunk of them female.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:28:31] So I have to say yes, I'm very honored that the Conch and SAGE is included in this group and in this collaboration, and I'm actually really excited. So we'll keep our eyes and ears peeled for that. Hopefully, this podcast will coincide with one of the days in 'Tis the Season, which also is a great name. You can't avoid a good seafood pun, even if you tried. So I really like that someone really clever came up with that. I want to segway a little bit to talking about what it's like to be a woman in this industry. And you mentioned going to the seafood show again. I'll come back to that and how it's a sea of blue suits, literally. OK, there's another pun, but a sea of blue suits I mentioned at the beginning of the podcast that you know you worked in restaurants and you're a chef. I put myself through high school and college and after college actually and grad school working in restaurants. I'm not a chef, but I worked as a server and a bartender. But the incredible skills that I learned in restaurants have carried me through my life considerably. And I mean, you know, learning about conflict management and conflict resolution and math and

learning about, you know, the fine wines and how to talk about wine and how to talk about food and where food comes from and where food grows and learning what it's like to be in prison. You know, like all of these things, I have learned a lot through working in kitchens and in restaurants. So clearly, you know, a lot of attention has been put on the kind of sexist, misogynist atmospheres in kitchen restaurants for relatively recently. And a lot of people have been called out on really perpetuating these kind of sexist environments, particularly in restaurant kitchens. And I think that is a great parallel with a lot that happens in the seafood industry, which is also, again, you know, very, you know, men driven, particularly men in leadership. And so what is your take on this and how has your experience as a woman in the seafood industry now? Is it similar or not to your experience in restaurant work?

Charlotte Langley [00:30:37] Yeah. As you were speaking, I was listening to you and I was reminded of a story that I shared once in a public space on a stage and the whole crowd was like, What the shit? And I was like, I want to share that story again. I'll make this reasonable as possible with time. But I started working in kitchens almost 20 years ago, 18 years later, that I rose the ranks quickly as a chef, as a chef that happens to be female and was awarded a job at a place called the Whalesbone in Ottawa, which is sort of like, find me as a chef. It was like a playground. It was beautiful. Amazing restaurant, amazing experience. I learned all those skills that you're talking about the conflict management, the conflict resolution, and I was asked to compete in a culinary competition for this festival. I was like, Yeah, for sure, I'll totally do that. So I showed up. I was practicing. I was like, You know, time me. I have 30 minutes to make this dish, and I had my team in the restaurants. They were timing me and I was like, No, really practicing to kick ass at the dishes. So I showed up and I was super nervous but confident in my dish. I knew it was tasty. I knew I could make it like this minute with some cool stuff, so I made this dish. To do these competitions you've got like a spotter, like someone behind you as a chef, like timing you, that's not working with you. And I was like, how much time is left and he's like, you're going too fast. Like, you got your shit together, you're almost too fast, girl. Take it easy. I was like, OK, deep breath. Big crowd. Everyone was like, You can kill. This is amazing. Oh my God, looks beautiful. Like now people get excited, it's like a live TV show, like Survivor of chefs. As I look down the line, there was myself and 12 other chefs that were all men. It was like, holy shit, this is some serious competition. And it was funny because like, there were messy, like the stations were crazy. I was like, What are these people doing? Anyway, I didn't win. I was like, OK, that's cool. I went up to the judge and I was like, Excuse me, just for personal growth. I'd like to know where I went wrong. And he goes, I'm going to say something to you, and I'm not sure how are you going to take this. I was like, OK. Your food was three times better than everybody else's. I was like, Oh, OK, well, thank you. He goes, and to win as a woman, your food has to be 10 times better than a man, I was like, Are you fucking kidding me? I said to him, I say, You got to be joking because I'm telling you that because I've traveled the world, I've judged these things blah blah blah blah. I've eaten at all these restaurants and female chefs are always better, but they don't get the recognition and you lost the second you walked in the door. It was all male judges. It was all male competitors. You were the only female and you were youngest. I was like. so what does this mean? He's like, This is how it is, and it's horrible. I walked away from him. I grabbed a bottle of wine. I basically pounded it back in one sit, and I went and cried in the shower of my hotel for like five hours. I was like, This can't be real. You can't be serious right now. And I was mind-blown because I never identified being treated differently until that moment. I thought I was like a part of the crowd, like I was a part of the team. I was a pro. I was a part of the culture and that was the first time I was objectified as a female in that space and I was heartbroken. So then I had to do an audition with a small competition

and I was simply heartbroken and I had a volunteer, who was this lovely man. It was a chowder competition and he tripped over a little line on the ground and dropped my deep fried biscuits, which for my garnish on the floor of this like concrete hall. I lost my shit. I pull this guy off. I thought so. I told him off so badly. I apologize later and I told him why, and he accepted my apology and he felt really sad. But I let it all out on him. Then I got to Ottawa and I had to fly back to work. After I exploded on this poor man packing my bags, I got the heck out of there and flew to Ottawa. I got a phone call. I landed on the plane and it was my sous chef who was like, Chef, everything's ready for you. So I was flying back to host the event that night in Ottawa and was this beautiful outdoor garden event. I walked into this kitchen and the team was like, they didn't know what had happened. They just knew I was coming back. The kitchen was organized. My station was set up. My sous chefs were like, We're Ready to go chef. These are the final details. The level of respect and care from this team washed all that shit away. I told them what the experience was like when it really came down to me is that the level of respect that these people shared with me as we were close friends know we had an honest, open relationship, conflict management, team management, the communication, the respect internally and the team that we had built together that I happened to be the executive chef of was real and all that bullshit in this competition, with men being that and women having to do X and Y. I was like, I choose to say, Screw you. I've live results. I'm sitting here right now with people that our mutual respect that don't look at me like I'm a chick in the kitchen. They look at me like a fucking chef. And they respect that and I've realized that it's in my attitude and how I approach the situation because no sexist guy's going to change. His approach is how I approach a space. When I walk in the Boston Seafood Show. I own it, its my space. I'm passionate. I'm helping my communities. I'm not giving up and get out of my way. Like don't fuck with me, so I'm tough. I'm also soft because I'm also soft romantic, lady, I don't fuck around.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:35:45] That is an incredible story and thank you so much for sharing that I can't even imagine that I it's I'm speechless, honestly. You recognize that, you know, the seafood industry is definitely very, very similar as in any male dominated industry. And so it's really your approach and your attitude as to how you are going to own this space and make it yours. I think that makes a huge difference. So, you know, we've talked about a lot of challenges. More so in the restaurant space, but definitely in the seafood space. And I've talked about these before, given all these challenges. I mean, do you think you'll stay in the seafood business and why?

Charlotte Langley [00:36:26] Absolutely. I don't know about you, but I find that there is less females to look up to and learn from, or they're really hard to find. And I've spent my entire career even as a chef, where are these ladies that I can talk to, you know, and or women identifying people that are like leading the space? They're there, but we are usually in a kitchen making it happen. They're on the line packing fish. They're doing all the things to make these projects real. I will definitely stay in the seafood industry because there needs to be more people like us in there standing up and being recognized for the work that we're doing. I think it's very important. You know, the traditional story of a fishmonger and the butcher? And Les Halles in France, like, you know, in the eighteen hundreds, all these like butcher shops and monger shops, fish shops, were run by families. You know, one side would be the fish, one side would be the meat. And women ran the fish shops. They were the mongers. And there is one reason that I like to. This is like a romantic reason that women have, their hands are less warm. They are more adept with small tools and knives, so they're able to care for and respect species. A lot more than men, are they, you know, they would attack big pieces of beef and hack of ribs and all that kind of shit, whereas women are more delicate by nature and in care and respect the

species a lot more so women are meant to be. We are a part of this industry and have been for ever. I have noticed, actually that only makes me want to stay there longer, do more.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:37:52] That's awesome. What you said about the lack of visibility of women in this industry and specifically in leadership is really one of the problems that SAGE and I am trying to address. And so I think, you know, there will be more visibility. And given your outspoken nature about this and mine as well, I think will that's all of us will continue to push the envelope and make sure that women are given their due and, you know, people of all genders, honestly, because I think the time is now and simply because of all of the problems associated with our ocean and climate change, specifically like women do need to be put up and given the chance to lead because the status quo is no longer viable for our planet and for the people of this world. So I really love that answer. And I honestly, when I think about this question, I also say because I love to eat seafood, and I think you would agree that that's definitely one of the major advantages of this career. So I have a couple other questions, if you don't mind. Are you OK on time?

Charlotte Langley [00:38:57] Absolutely, I just wanted to say one thing to you too before you ask me the question is that I hope you allow yourself to recognize that you are doing this work too and that it's working. You know, the more that we have these conversations and the impact that is building slowly but powerfully like, I think we give ourselves the hard time that we're not doing enough or leaving more impact or having more results immediately and I hope you recognize something that I struggle with is that we're on a path where we care and we're working diligently to do this project and this work and that we should give ourselves like, you know, two seconds of recognition or gratitude that, you know, we're doing the work. I hope you like allow yourself to be kind about the work that you're doing because it's a shit show

Julie Kuchepatov [00:39:37] I actually do. I am giving myself a pat on the back as we speak, but a very gentle pat. So you can't hear it on the microphone, on the sensitive microphone. But yeah, I do. It's true, especially in this time of quarantine and the global pandemic. It's very difficult to really find those connections that sustain you, especially over the internet or on a Zoom call. And so it is very isolating, and sometimes I do honestly feel like I'm just by myself over here thinking these thoughts. But I do recognize that there are a lot of people that are really cheering me on specifically, but also each other on. And I think you're one of those people. So thank you for that note. And again, as this podcast is really the goal is to inspire women who are working in or thinking about starting a career in the seafood sector. What is some advice that you would give to women who are already here or thinking about starting a career in this exciting sector?

Charlotte Langley [00:40:34] It's a really excellent question. I would say for advice, knowing my nature, I like to think I can do lots of things at once because I think that's my chefs training as well, you know, the multitasking extravaganza, which is mostly B.S., but focusing on what you're really interested in, for example, like let's say you are, want to be an ocean advocate or an ocean steward, or you want to work with a fishery that has got FIPs in place to make them improve upon their place. And for them, you know, the fishery operations, which is the fishery improvement program and you're really good at writing or your passion is writing or you know that that's what it is. Start writing about these things research, educate, interview and focus on a category that's going to sing in your voice. Like, don't get on the vac packing station line, necessarily, if that's what you're not interested in. I think it's about understanding where you think you can fit into the space or

make space for yourself is a better way to say it. Find what you love about it and focus on that channel. I think that I was able to find the Scout, the canning thing because I was like, I wanted to create something delicious in a small package, and I want you able to take it home. So it makes sense to me and put something into a can. Maybe you're more like mission driven, or maybe you are into seafood marketing and you want to take tons of beautiful photos of responsible fishers and wherever, whatever world country you're in. Focus on what you really love. That's, you know, and it'll work. You just have to be diligent.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:41:55] That's what I love about this business also is that there are so many different career choices that you can entrance points into the sector. And like you said, you could be a photographer, you could be a marketer, you could be a salesperson, you could be a nonprofit activist. There's a million different ways. And that's what I hope to showcase on the Conch here on this podcast is like just the wide variety of career choices that this sector does offer.

Charlotte Langley [00:42:20] So yeah, it's very broad there. Lots of channels for you to get involved in, and they're all important.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:42:27] So what can we expect from you in the future or from you or from Scout? I mean, we already talked about clams, so maybe from you, let's say.

Charlotte Langley [00:42:37] Me? Well, I actually have this sort of new dream, and I never thought it would be real. I said, if I can get this figured out by the time I'm 40 years old, that'll be a miracle and I'm thirty seven. So I was grateful, but I had this idea where I ideated Scout in 2014, and it's taken six years for it to become a commercially viable business. And that means we're selling products commercially and we're receiving some money from it. We're still a not profitable company or something going to have because the nuances of tinning food is very complex. But anyway, one of the biggest challenges for me personally as a female entrepreneur is that it was hard to find access to resources, and these were primarily around financial resources. So I can do up a deck. I can present to you, I can do all those things, but the channels to find access to revenue or fundraising, for example, I really sucked at and I haven't said it so loud to anybody yet. So I want to start a fund. And I would like to start a VC fund that is for entrepreneurs that happen to be female, and they're focused on seafood sector and or ocean regeneration projects and to build a fund with other people's money. And some of my own, hopefully to help find people, give people better access to these projects. It took me literally six years just to get a product tested and done. And people are like, so innovative and so creative, and women are coming up with these amazing projects, but they have no access to funding. That was the biggest barrier for me, but it's a dream that I have and it's like a 10 year plan for me is to build this fund and help people get funding.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:44:10] So I am thrilled that you shared this with us first. This can be called our first official scoop that we're going to share with the world.

Charlotte Langley [00:44:19] It's definitely a scoop.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:44:21] it's definitely a scoop. And I absolutely agree with you that this is something that is necessary. Women definitely receive minuscule percent of venture capital funding. I can't remember the exact number, but it's something like out of 100 percent of VC capital women get like 2.2 percent. So it's very small and I agree with you. And then when you put it in the context of seafood, I'm sure it's even smaller. So funding

and financial resources are a barrier to women everywhere for everything. So this is not unique. However, it's still very acute, right? And it's definitely a testament to you that you were able to get Scout off the ground, you know, with using your own clever ways to find financing and to finance that. So congratulations on that, and I really look forward to thinking about this financing idea with you. And potentially if there are any listeners on here who would like to support this idea, I'm sure you would welcome any advice. But I don't want to speak for you. I don't want people to give you unsolicited advice unless you really want it. So how can people find you and Scout on the internet if they do want to get in contact with you in the future?

Charlotte Langley [00:45:32] Absolutely. I did need help to get where I am today. I didn't do this all alone, of course. And I got partners that have supported me and are still supporting these daily and figure out this funding as they help provide the tools. I'm very grateful to my partners that happen to be guys. Interestingly enough, Adam and Nate, that helped make my dream come true. I have a great amount of respect for them, and I'm just grateful that they were able to help me. So I didn't just throw that in there because it's no, I'm not alone. I thought I was, but I wasn't, of course. So we showed up and helped me out a lot. I can't even believe it. But if you're interested in getting in touch with me, I love meeting people and I love, there's no secrecy or I'm not like hiding in the woods somewhere. You can email me, Charlotte@scoutcanning.com. I'm around. I love emails. I love learning from people. I love talking to people if they want to check out products, which I always highly recommend as we're heading into the holiday season and enjoy [@scout.com](https://www.scout.com). And you can follow us on social media [@scoutcanning](https://www.instagram.com/scoutcanning) on Instagram or [@chefcharlottelangley](https://www.instagram.com/chefcharlottelangley) on Instagram. And yeah, that's because those are the top four places to hit us up at.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:46:34] Thank you so much. So we're at the end of our conversation, unfortunately, and I know you have to go call your peeps in P.E.I. to find out some quality stuff. I don't know what it is. I don't know. I don't know what you're doing. But in any event, I do want to thank you so much for joining me on this episode of the Conch. And I think it's been an amazing conversation, and I really hope that our listeners will check you out on any of those channels that you mention and follow along with your amazing progress. And I would also like to give a shout out to SAGE and Seafood and Gender Equality. If people want to sign up for our newsletter. It's not quarterly. It's kind of whenever we have some news, we'll send it out and you can do that on [SeafoodandGenderEquality.org](https://www.SeafoodandGenderEquality.org). And I really encourage people to sign up for our newsletter because you will hear updates probably from Chef Charlotte as well as other partners that we are working with. And I guess on that, I will say again, thank you, Charlotte, for joining me, and it was super great to finally get to talk to you. And I know this is a small step in our burgeoning friendship that will continue on probably forever.

Charlotte Langley [00:47:43] Well, thank you so much for having me, and I really appreciate you listening to my stories and making space and time for me. I'm so grateful. I'm so stoked to get to know you better.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:47:52] Awesome. Thank you. Thanks. The.

Crystal Sanders_Alvarado [00:47:57] Conch podcast is a program of seafood and gender equality, or SAGE. Audio production, engineering, editing, mixing and sound design by Crystal Sanders-Alvarado for Seaworthy, the theme song Dilation is written and

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