

## The Conch Sz1Ep4ASanchez-COMLETE.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 so fortunate to have a very special guest joining us, Adriana Sanchez. So we have a lot to talk about with Adriana, and she is the Responsible Seafood Strategy Director of Iberostar Hotels, the founder of Seafood Ninja, a sustainable seafood consultancy, a mother of four kids and a great advocate for sustainable and responsible seafood. Welcome and thank you, Adriana, for joining me today on the Conch. Let's get started.

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:00:49] Great, thank you, Julie, for having me, I'm very excited to speak to you and learn more about what you guys are doing for this podcast.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:00:58] Awesome, Adriana. You and I have known each other for a long time, but I am so interested in learning more about you as you have a very interesting life in terms of how your different roles intersect. You're originally from Venezuela. You're a sustainable seafood expert and have worked at both nonprofits and at your family's seafood business. And importantly, you're a mother of four kids. Perhaps we can start with your back story and what led you to the place you are today.

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:01:25] Right. Well, I think that for like most people that come from a family that is in the business, in the seafood industry, I kind of just fell into the role. I was actually living in Gainesville, Florida, working for University of Florida International Center when my dad called me to see if I was interested in working for the family business and come back to Miami. And he was telling me about how they needed help with supply chain. You know, in our business and our industry, you have to really work with people that you trust to introduce them to your vendors. And also, there was this new thing about sustainable seafood. He had just come from the Global Expo in Brussels, and he was telling me how, you know, the Europeans are always ahead of us and they're talking about sustainable seafood and we don't know what it is. So he wanted me to come and work with our supply chain. Also understand and learn what this new thing about sustainability was because he didn't feel that it was just a fad. He knew that this was going to come to the U.S. and he wanted to be prepared. So what started as a part time sustainability role quickly grew into a full time sustainability role, and as many people in the family business, you wear different hats. So I also worked with the marketing and the social media and worked closely with the sales team. So it evolved from supply chain to sustainability and also marketing. And so that's kind of how I came to be in the seafood industry.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:02:53] So you've since left your father's business, which is called what, again?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:02:58] Sea Delight. So yes. So I left Sea Delight to find new ways to grow my impact. I wanted to do more in our industry aside from working in the family. So this is how I started Seafood Ninja, which came from being a blog where I just talked about what I saw and the sustainability movement, as it related to the industry. And then I became a consultant. And then I found this opportunity where working with fair trade, which at that time had launched a seafood certification, and that's how I came to work with

you and learned a lot more about this holistic approach for sustainability that looked at not only environment, but also at social. And I got to learn a lot from that perspective. You know, the social perspective also working with NGOs and understanding some of the dynamics between NGO and industry and how to translate these really high level asks for NGO, for environmental and social needs and to what industry could find or be more receptive to and really understand what is it that I needed to do in order to engage in improvement.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:04:05] So after you abandoned me at Fair Trade, where did you end up?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:04:12] Oh yes, very important. Well, after I did not abandon you, it fell in my lap. I feel like everything happens for a reason, so a new opportunity came to be and working for Iberostar Hotels. They have a Wave of Change Movement that has three pillars. One is circular economy. Another one is coastal health. And the third one is responsible seafood. And they were looking for a responsible seafood strategy director that could help them develop the strategy for them to reach 100 percent responsible by 2025. I was very fortunate that they chose me to work with them, and I started in that role in November 1st of 2019, and a few months into that role, we were hit by the pandemic and just, I think it was, we had launched our strategy and our five year commitment. We were facing the pandemic and we quickly had to figure things out and readjust.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:05:11] Yeah, I am joking when I say that you abandoned me because I loved working with you. And also, it's one of my greatest joys to see people that I work with go on and conquer other areas and other challenges. And so I actually say this with great pride because I am very proud of you. So one thing I do want to ask is I'd love to know a little bit more about the responsible seafood pillar at Iberostar Hotels and how does that look like? Do you buy a lot of seafood for the hotel restaurants and advise them on the sourcing? Or do you source locally or from fishermen outside of the hotel property? How does that look? And then I'd also like to learn a little bit more about what you started to talk about in terms of the pandemic and how has that affected your ability to maintain your commitments to sustainable seafood? Because this is a very difficult time, right? And so how has Iberostar Hotels been able to adjust and kind of keep their commitment rolling given this really difficult time?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:06:20] Yes. For the hotel, the tourism sector, it's a different animal. And I say that with a lot of love working in the industry with importers, exporters and even producers is very different than working from the hotel perspective. So as an end buyer, we first had to define that responsible seafood. What does that mean for hotels in a way that it makes sense? Because I work with a global office, so we have EMEA, which is in Europe, Middle East and Africa, and we have the Americas, so I work with the purchasing teams in both regions. So how do you go from understanding sustainability under certifications because they have these partnerships with MSC and ASC and they had been the first Southern European hotel to get certified chain of custody, MSC and ASC, to say, OK, well, we procure over a hundred and twenty eight species. So how are we going to get to 100 percent responsible in 2025 if MSC and ASC certifications are a handful of species? So we quickly had to decide how we're going to define responsible and this is how we landed on it. What I always call the cookie cutter, right? So we partner with a Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative, and we decided to accept certifications that have been benchmarked by GSSI, that's the first pillar under Responsible Seafood. The second one is improvement or rated by Seafood Watch. So that is your yellow or green, if also any

fishery improvement projects or aquaculture improvement project, and then we have our third pillar, which is Lifting up Local and that one is that little more more complex because this has to do with the local fisheries in the destinations where we operate. These are often fisheries that are not exporting to global markets. So there's really not your traditional marketing standards for them to engage in improvement because they're not high volume or there's not a buyer saying you need to be sustainable or you need to develop a FIP. They're also not cost effective to develop fishery improvement projects or even pursue certification because of the nature of the fishery where they are located. Also, the volumes that they produce. So that whole other pillar is really where we are going as a hotel and the tourism sector. That's where we're going to have our greatest impact, I think. With the pandemic and the closures of all the hotels. I think, you know, I have to thank my boss, the global director of sustainability for Iberostar, because she really was able to make a case of how we could build back better coming out of the pandemic, and we were able to retain our team given their commitments of Iberostar's towards sustainability, not just in seafood, but also for coastal health and circular economy. So they were really pioneering and having this vision for the future post-pandemic. So they really wanted to make sure that the team and the talent that comes with our team stayed within the hotel. But what we did was quickly, so why waste a good crisis? And we worked on creating a seafood working group where we invited the operations team, which includes the kitchen, the corporate chefs and also our procurement team to start talking about what we needed to do in order to achieve our goals. Because in 2020, our first milestone was forty five percent responsible, according to a definition that I had. So we focused on the low hanging fruit, which was the top 10 species by volume, and we started working with our vendors. It was a time where everything was frozen. We were frozen in time. The hotels are closed, the suppliers are working on a limited capacity. So let's use this as an opportunity to start figuring all the data points that we're missing. Start building that internal capacity with our procurement, the training, that learning curve. What is sustainable seafood? What do we need from you? Why are we collecting data? What is traceability? So using that downtime, downtime in quotations, to really drive our commitments and the opportunities that we saw and sort of reimagining menus and thinking about what we could live without and what we needed to focus on. And that's how we were able to get to forty one percent by the end of 2020. We didn't really get to forty five percent, but we didn't see that as a negative because given the situation and the challenges that we face, getting to 41 percent and laid the foundation for when the hotel started to reopen that we could continue to procure and increase our responsible seafood volume, then we would have the tools not just for our office, but also for an operation to continue to buy better products and change menus and make sure that we were staying true to our commitment. So with that said, you know, 2021 was a year of reopening, of readjusting for working with our suppliers to circumvent some of our supply chain disruptions. So we have to get creative around what we put on the menu and what wasn't available and then, with that, we were able to reach past 65 percent procurement and work with some NGO partners to start developing this framework of what is "lifting up local" because we don't want it to be like Adriana says this fishery is responsible or not. We want it to be something that could withstand scrutiny and make sure that we're not greenwashing. So that definition needs to follow our legal framework and also looking not only at environmental indicators, but also social. Knowing that a lot of these fisheries that are domestic to this nation where we operate are small-scale, artisanal, so we have to balance. This need to meet our 100 percent responsible commitment, but also not stop procuring products that also provides livelihoods for these communities. So that's sort of like key, and that's the kind of work really excited to do. And one of the reasons why I also why I left Fair Trade because I was looking to create more impact and how to have a role where I could do more. And I think that for the tourism sector, not just

only Iberostar, that is an opportunity to really engage in fisheries and create a path towards improvement that may be not a traditional. I call them the forgotten, you know, these and other fisheries that are not high volume, high commodity, but they still need support, and they also need to be engaged because livelihoods depend on that. And seafood at the end of the day is about people. So I talk a lot.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:12:51] No, that's great. That was a lot of great information, and I think it was really helpful to hear the trajectory of the thinking because I think a lot of people when the pandemic first started, you know, freaked out and didn't know what to do. And it sounds like your team really took the opportunity to step back and think about how to create a real strong system and foundation moving forward, thinking that, you know, this isn't going to last forever. So let's make some lemons or some lemonade rather out of these lemons and actually build a system that will work while we experience all the things that we're experiencing in terms of lack of fish and supply chain issues, et cetera. So I think that's really great, and I do want to flag for some of our listeners who might not be familiar with the sustainable seafood movement and some of the tools you mentioned the ASC and the MSC - the ASC stands for Aquaculture Stewardship Council, and that's a standard for aquaculture production. And then the Marine Stewardship Council is MSC, and that is an eco label for wild capture and measuring and assessing environmental performance in global fisheries. So, yes, again, we used to work at Fair Trade Together and Fair Trade is the nonprofit. And as you know, and I know you have opinions on this, so that's why I'm asking this question. You know, environmental nonprofits make a lot of demands of the seafood industry around sustainability and responsibility, and fishermen in many cases ultimately bear the brunt of these requests in terms of implementation and sometimes even the financial burden, right? And so this is definitely not just in the U.S., but internationally. And so these demands such as, you know, around traceability and transparency and engaging in policy and reflecting the true cost of seafood in pricing, these lists go on. But because you've worked on both sides of the nonprofit side and then the business side in your experience and what advice would you give to nonprofits that they should know or remember when dealing with the seafood industry, particularly when making requests around environmental and social responsibility? And so how do we find a balance that will be a win-win for everyone?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:15:05] Man, you really want me to ruffle some feathers, shake that hornet's nest, is that when it's called? The other idiom? Well, now that you mention it, where do I start? So when we talk about seafood industry and supply chain, we often forget there's like many different stakeholders and they hold different positions of power and influence. A lot of these initiatives and replies are driven by mostly retailers and some of the foodservice who have partnerships with NGOs that have set or helped them set the tone for what their environmental commitments need to be. What we often do not discuss, because it's kind of like we don't want to upset anybody is that retailers have the largest margins on seafood. So when you ask of an importer to implement specific measures for improvement and that gets pushed down to producers, these are people who work with margins that are maybe three to five percent. So they don't have a lot of wiggle room in terms of resources to go full blown, implementing best practices or even incentivizing change through premiums, like paid to the fishermen. Retailers, on the other hand, work sometimes with margins that are 35 to 40 percent, if not more. So there's that discrepancy there, you know, on how our natural resources are available. So what I always say, it's sort of the irony of retailers and some of these end buyers driving the need to address environmental and social issues when they are the first ones to be exacerbating these issues because they do not want to pay more for the product. So there's a disconnect,

right? And we always talk about transparency, and sometimes these are murky waters, and nobody really wants to talk about it because then you don't want to bite the hand that feeds you, especially if you're an NGO and have partnerships that pay for your consultancy or your support. So how do you balance the need to address environmental and social issues and in producing countries? I think, you know, just having an honest conversation and figure out where in your supply chain can you manage, maybe or divert some of the costs in into creating premiums or even funding some of these projects. I know that as funders, the big funders have diverted some of their funding because their funders can either fund projects forever. A lot of the industry has been asked to step in and start helping fund some of these projects, whether they like matching funds per pound that they are importing so they can continue to provide incentives for change. So it's really a complex question. And of course, it's easier for me to say, Oh, you know, retailers need to pay more for seafood and that need to diminish their margins so that importers can actually have some wiggle room to be able to support the practice in the first place because it's not that simple, but also, you know, there is a reality that it's outside of our sphere of influence. You know, you have countries, producing countries, that also have socioeconomic issues that are going beyond importers and what they can do and regulations and enforcement that need to be addressed. So it's a little bit of a dancing game, but I think if we were to invest in creating consumer awareness and really helping consumers understand that their purchasing power can drive change in this fishery and in the water, maybe, you know, sort of like what the fair trade model has done. We could justify or or request or ask that retailers use or invest themselves into these projects by helping put this premium towards improvement or even like increasing salaries or paying more for the fish. You know, at the end of the day, when we think about sustainability, the fishermen and water farmers are the first ones to not benefit from any of these improvements. They don't get paid more for the catch unless you're on a fair trade model, but you know that's another conversation to have.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:19:15] That's a great answer. And I think again, it is a complex problem, and it's one that I think everybody grapples with is how to make sure that the value of the hard work not only that fish farmers are doing to generate a product or to produce a product or catch a product is the value that they're getting right now is way less than what they should be getting. So how do we make sure some of that value gets back to them, not only some of that value, but as much value as we can, because they're the ones that are doing all the hard work and bearing all the risks and facing a lot of real serious challenges around, add climate change to the mix. So I absolutely agree. And I think, you know, we were both at the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions meeting last week or this week rather. And I think some of the outcomes of that meeting were very, very strongly worded outcomes that we definitely need to figure out how to focus or make sure that the value of the work that the fisher and the farmers are doing is being paid for, that they're actually being fairly compensated for their work. So that is a challenge. And again, complex problems have a need for complex solutions. So I want to ask about we talked about this at the beginning about Seafood Ninja, which is your consultancy. And so I'd like to learn more about Seafood Ninja and what are your plans for the future? Because I think you're more known as the Seafood Ninja than you are as the Responsible Seafood Strategy Director at Iberostar Hotels. Can you tell me more about Seafood Ninja?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:20:45] Yeah. You know, I think that Super Ninja is like a brand. I think it became a brand or my alter ego. It's a mermaid in a circle hug. You know, my youngest, my three year old says, Look, it's my mom. So I think that he gets it right. It's my brand. I had a dream or have a dream, rather, that Seafood Ninja would help democratize

the access to sustainable seafood conversations or engagement. Because what I found working in both the NGO and industry is that we focus so much on the big hitters, right, like the big companies. And I understand why, you know, they're the ones driving the volume and driving, having the financial means to invest in a lot of these projects. But in my belief, if there is a market for seafood that is not responsible or sustainable, whichever definition, how you want to describe that we will always have issues in supply chain. So there's an entire world of small companies that do not want to invest or have not figured out how to even engage in the conversation because a partnership with an NGO might be outside their means, or they feel that it's expensive and they don't see their return on investment or like right away, or they're not really trying to sell to the Krogers or the Wal-Marts and the Costcos of the world. So there's really no need for them to engage in sustainable practices. That doesn't mean that they shouldn't be part of the conversation. So I created Seafood Ninja trying to create sort of access, like level the playing field, providing some tools or some sort of ability to answer questions about how people can engage in the sustainable seafood movement without them having to go broke or break bank to do so. I can't, honestly it hasn't spread like wildfire, but that is my dream that one day different companies can say, OK, this is a safe space for them to find the information that they need in a way that they can digest that, right? Because that's another thing I saw. There's a lot of tools that have been developed by NGOs and there's a lot of white papers and a lot of websites that you can scroll down forever. And these companies don't have dedicated sustainability staff. They have sales people, and a sales person is not going to sit through reading a white paper on the intersection of gender and environmental and social. They want to get the gist of it and know what to ask is and what they need to do. So Seafood Ninja, it's a platform to do that. How do we digest all this great information that extends into bite size sound bites that sales teams and that these companies can listen to and maybe digest and hopefully engage in and find ways that they can engage in a way that makes sense to their company. So that's sort of my hope for Seafood Ninja. Right now, I'm focused 100 percent on my role at Iberostar, but Seafood Ninja still exists as this platform. And when I have the time I create things and tools to be able to digest these high level concepts for people I want to like listen to. But I'll be honest, I need to get better at posting on social, creating this as a social media campaign, but it's hard. You know, creating, generating content for social media can be challenging at times. So instead of, you know, finding the right tone and growing that following. But that's kind of what Seafood Ninja is you know, just a platform to provide access and hopefully it will take off one day.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:24:18] I think it will. And because I do think that Seafood Ninja is, as a platform, a really valuable tool for, like you said, those smaller companies that don't have their own sustainability teams or don't have access to a nonprofit advisor partner because of the cost or for whatever reason, or they simply don't know, and they want to learn more. I think it's invaluable, and I do commend you for building that platform on your own. And I think people do recognize the value of it. And I think, you know, one thing that I learned previously is that a lot of these seafood companies just aren't very good about marketing and having an online presence. And so social media like it's no surprise that they aren't, you know, seeing you potentially on social media, because I think with SAGE, I have the same exact issue like I don't see a lot of these companies engaging on, you know, social media platforms regardless, even if they're LinkedIn, which is specifically a business platform. So I think you're right, and maybe we should think about this offline together because I do believe they have a problem, or the industry has a problem with being out there enough to accept new ideas and new ways to do things. You know, SAGE as a concept. Also, gender equality in seafood is a new concept for many people. Seafood Ninja can be a new idea for a lot of these smaller companies that simply are trying to

survive and exist, especially right now. So I'm going to segue into a discussion a little bit more about women and our experiences of women in the seafood industry, in the seafood sector. So I have a theory about the seafood industry and its lack of women in leadership, and I think I've quoted this statistic before where at last count there was four women CEOs out of 100 seafood companies. So that is a very small percentage. We actually want to see that increase like 500 times. But you know, the lack of women in leadership is a serious problem. And so I'm curious, you know, because of your start in the industry and at your family's business, I think you're uniquely positioned to tell me if my theory has some validity and I'm interested in your thoughts. So you know, the majority of companies in the U.S. seafood industry are family owned businesses, and I do not know the exact percentage because no one has crunched the numbers. But I think you look at any seafood company and they're more often than not started by a family or family run and owned business if they aren't currently than they were in the past. So I think the family dynamics play a role in the lack of women at the leadership level. And I think that the fathers that start and run these businesses pass the baton of leadership on down to their sons. Obviously, if they have them, of course there are exceptions. But again, I do think this contributes to a lack of women in a leadership position. So as the daughter of a leader in the seafood industry with his own family business, do you think this theory has merit?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:27:18] Yeah, talk about the ultimate patriarchy. Right?

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:27:22] Right.

[00:27:23] Yes. And and you know, there are exceptions, and there's also cultural dynamics at play. We are Latin or Hispanic. So there's this cultural dynamic in that sense. You know, not to say like my dad is "machista" because it's not true or questionable. It depends on where you see it from. But the role that I had at Sea Delight was, you know, in sustainability, it's marketing. You know, they see this as sort of very foofoo, right? It's very sort of nice, but it's not producing. It doesn't produce you money. Had I been in finance or sales or having a role that you can tangibly or quantifiably say Adriana is producing, you know, generating wealth, then the dynamic would have been different. It's hard to answer because there's all these different moving factors. But you know, traditionally family businesses started with your father's and then the dynamic with their daughters is that they love you, but they, in a way, don't think about it. You can do the job the way that your male counterparts do, and specifically, then you become a mother and then it's like, Oh, you're going to be with your baby or your kids, so you're not going to be available to give 100 percent to the role. And sometimes seafood businesses feel like twenty four, seven, seven days a week. So if you have families, then there's this sort of misconception that you're not going to be able to produce or be successful in the role.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:28:54] Yeah, that is a great answer, and do you think that there's a thought in, for instance, and I'm not speaking directly by any means to your dad, but I'm speaking in general to the, you know, leaders of family run businesses. Let's just say, as a general kind of group of people like, do you think that they think also that they have concerns about passing the baton of leadership to their daughters because the industry is so sexist?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:29:25] Yeah. I mean, think about it. A lot of businesses are done when in playing golf, fishing and drinking. Strip clubs. I've heard. I haven't seen it, but I've heard. You know, you pass the business to your daughter then or a woman in that industry, sometimes, you know, they have to prove themselves and you have to be cool. You have

to have thick skin. You can be, that's another thing, is that you can't be emotional, you know, like you're not allowed to be emotional. .If you're emotional, you're irrational. Mind you, these are men that throw big tantrums that have nothing. But if you have an emotion response to something, then you're weak and you're being a crybaby. You so, the industry and the dynamic between women and men is very sort of a double standard. And there's a lot of sexism. And yeah, you know, and I think that condition is that your ability to grow, you know, to find new roles like, I find that, for example, my experience that I can't be too direct or, you know, I have to treat men and their egos like with like silk gloves, you know, because if not that, god forbid, you know, they get offended, then I could lose the relationship. Or, you know, you could lose the sale or they could not respect you because then they think you're a B. I. T. C. H., you know, so there's a band there. You know, you want to be strong, but you cannot be too strong. You want to be cute, but you don't want to be too cute because they will not take you seriously, you know? But it's our experience I think as women moving in the world, it's not just seafood industry. I think overall, that's just sort of the world we live in. You know?

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:31:04] Yeah, I was going to say, I think that what you just described is not unique to the seafood industry, it's definitely part of it, but it happens in a lot of other industries and sectors. And thankfully, you know, we're here to draw attention to that, at least SAGE is. And I will try as hard as I can because, you know, not only does this kind of behavior negatively affect any women that might want to come into the industry, but it does really affect the men in the industry, too. And this constant almost requirement to be a macho man or I guess, not go play golf. I mean, not everybody likes golf, not everybody wants to go to a strip club. So why is there, you know, this real requirement around that? And so I think, you know, a lot of guys want to stay home with their kids and meet their, you know, not work 90 hours a week. So I think specifically around gender equality, it's like really making this a great industry for everyone, people of all genders, not just women, right? And so to me, that's a really valid theory, and I'm glad that you kind of agree as well.

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:32:04] Can I add something, though, before we move forward? And this might not be like a popular concept, but the women in our industry though.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:32:12] Yes.

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:32:12] And it has been my experience that they have not always been supportive of other women, which I understand some of them had to pull themselves out of. What is the expression out of the bootstraps or something? You know? So when they see this younger generation of women that maybe don't have to do the same? Ironically, I found it very, very difficult to find a woman mentor in the seafood industry. I found plenty of men mentors that I learned a lot from, considering how sexist the space could be and the sort of dynamics. But I tried to find women that I could look up to and be mentors in the space, and it was crooked. So to be fair to the men also in seafood industry, there's some work that we also need to do. Women and women supporting women, especially those few that have made it to a position of leadership, not mentoring or not providing mentorship to those that are a new up and coming, or I think this is sort of a disservice to our goals. So just putting it out there because there's all the women listening to here, like it's important that we support each other.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:33:29] Yes, and I absolutely agree, and I hope there are other women listening. Of course, I hope someone will listen to this podcast. I do agree with you. And that's why one of SAGE's goals or one of my goals with SAGE is to create some sort



of mentorship almost like a more formalized mentorship opportunity to work with leaders. And, you know, they can be of any gender, right? And I agree with you. Again, this is not unique. What you just said, I don't think is unique to the seafood industry, but it is glaring. As I mentioned, there are so few women in leadership and so we really need those that are in leadership to support the other women are just people in general coming up and giving them the support because that's the only way we're going to be able to change the industry to make it really attractive to new people that are thinking about joining the industry. And I don't want to paint a rosy picture about how great the industry is, but I also don't want to sugarcoat any of the challenges because I think this is an amazing industry and really, really fun and has given me personally a lot of opportunities. But there are challenges. So how can we kind of simultaneously address these challenges, but also retain a lot of the great things about the industry in order to encourage new and enthusiastic people to get in into the mix? So I have a question about motherhood and you have four children. Congratulations on your newest child who is, I think you said, two months old now. So great. Oh my gosh. So how has motherhood influenced your career in the seafood industry?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:34:57] Well, you know, I don't find motherhood to define me as a woman or as a career woman, but I mean, it's a driving force behind what I do. So finding that balance right to look for roles that allow me to be present with my kids' life have so that flexibility, you know, working from home or being able to set boundaries by, you know, about like, OK, family time is important also. My career is important to me and also having it specifically with sustainability. It's like how great it is that I get to have a job or a career that it's looking to improve the way we eat and harvest and produce seafood across the globally right and then teach that to my children to be a little bit more aware about food production or environmental issues, or use that as a platform for them to also be engaged and grow up to be citizens of the world and environmentally conscious. Or you know what do you call it? A conscious consumer. Because by the end of the day, that's the future, right? And because I have four children, I've also learned so much about how to manage my time and how to manage the family. And these are things that translate also into the role, right? And then you're managing tiny little humans, but also working with different teams across different sectors, and organization is key. So to be successfully running a household and also running a business or working within a business, so I think that being a mom, it's like my greatest joy and I do what I do because of them. I think at the end of the day, I want to leave my legacy for them and for them to be proud of the work that we're doing.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:36:43] I love it. The next question I had was going to be given all the challenges that we've discussed., why do you stay in the seafood business? And I think you already answered that because I think you just literally answered that question. Is there any other reason that you would like to offer?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:36:58] None! The seafood industry is fun! And I always say that we should have a show about me. I'm sure there's like there's shows about the seafood industry in different categories, you have, like Alaskan crab or whatever, but it's fun, it's challenging. It's dynamic. It's never the same. You know, whether you're lobbying a legal regulation part or you're looking on the environmental part or you're looking at fishing stock, or people. There's not one face; it's multifaceted. I think that's the word for it. So it doesn't matter what your background is or what your interest is, there's a little bit of everything for everybody. So you can if you want to work with people, you can work with people, you want to work with fisheries or fisheries. You want to work with just fish or dead

fish. And there's an area for you and it's fun and you get to travel and you get to eat. I mean, you have to love eating seafood, that's like a perk of the rule. You get to eat amazing food and meet amazing people and know that no matter what you're doing and in what capacity you're doing, if you look at the greater scheme of things and we go back to the first thing I said, seafood is about people and seafood is about feeding people, and it's also about how we are connected as people through food production of food systems. So for me, it's just very, very, very exciting. And to be a part of that is like, why not, you know, challenge accepted. All industries have a challenge, so this one just happens to be the one I'm really passionate about.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:38:24] Yeah, I second everything that you just said, especially the travel and the seafood and the food, because without that, I think it might not. It might not be as an attractive business for me because I love the seafood and I love the travel, and certainly I love the people too. And then this podcast is to inspire women like working in or thinking about starting a career in the seafood sector. So I'm curious, like, what advice would you give besides what you already said around how, you know, interesting and challenging and fantastic this business is, but what advice would you give to women already in the business or thinking about starting a career in this industry?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:39:00] Well, if you're already in the industry and you find yourself burnt out or questioning your purpose because that happens to me, sometimes I wonder, am I doing? So I go back to like what's best for the oceans and then I try to find what drives me. And we didn't talk about this, but I studied political science. I'm very interested in social movements, and the politics of it all is so I go back to like, why am I doing this is because I want to provide a service. I want to serve people. I want to work with fishermen and helping livelihoods, and that's what drives me. And then if you're entering this phase as a whole, you know, when you're looking for a career, be very clear on what your goals are like. What is it you're looking to do? If you're not sure, then if it doesn't matter, you know you try it and you test the waters and you try different things. You know, like again, the seafood industry is so multifaceted that if you're interested in following assurance, you can start there. And then maybe that would role grows into looking at regulations and regulation enforcement. Or you start looking at, you know, you're an environmental microbiology or biologist and you're looking at stock assessments, but then you decide, you know, I don't want to study just stocks. I want to work with the people that are sourcing the product. Then you can move into a role like sustainability or you're doing sustainability, and then you realize you're very passionate about how to communicate the great work the company is doing and then you start doing marketing. So I think that it's understanding that seafood is not just dead fish. You know, there's nothing glamorous about that, right? But when you open that door, you can see in this world of possibilities, and there's so many different things that you can do, no matter what you went to school for in discovering your passions. I think that's the exciting part of it, really. You enter the business thinking that you're going to do one thing and then you realize that there's a passion behind it that you didn't know existed. I don't know. Am I sounding like delirious but asking what happened to me? You know, I started with purchase orders. There's nothing exciting about purchase orders, and I found sustainability, and then I found marketing and I found people and telling a story, and I'm very passionate about that.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:41:08] Yeah, you don't sound delirious. You sound very passionate as I know you are. And I think it translates into your answers for sure. I think I agree with you. I know that, you know, find your passion and what's your purpose? And then anywhere you turn, if you think this industry might be good for you, you will be able to find

your way. Is there anything that you want to share with our listeners that you haven't shared yet or we haven't touched on yet?

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:41:35] No, I think that pretty much covered it all, you know,.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:41:39] Well, we didn't even get started, really to cover it all. We could have devled....

[00:41:45] Like, you know, summarizing is there is a need for addressing gender inequality within the seafood industry and we need more women to step up and sort of take on this role of leading the conversation around supporting other women also in the industry so that we as a group have some leverage, some influence. I think that also the seafood industry is multifaceted and there's like a little bit of everything for everybody. And it's a great experience as a whole. And I think that, you know, if you're passionate about food and people, this is definitely the industry to go to because there's so much of it. I'm still waiting to become an influencer. You know, I think Julie and I, we should become influencers that are like just specifically in an industry. You know, there's tons of influencers, but I think we need a different kind of influencer. So I'm still trying to crack that nut and I'll keep you posted on that.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:42:41] Well, you need to have something go viral for sure. We can we can keep working on that together. We can brainstorm. So and speaking of internet, our listeners can find you how on the internet? Tell us your website.

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:42:58] Seafoodninja.com, @seafoodninja on IG and Facebook and Twitter and Pinterest. I'm Seafood Ninja.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:43:05] You are, you are the seafood ninja. And with that, I am going to say thank you, Adriana Sanchez, for joining me today on this episode of the Conch. I can't wait to see where Seafood Ninja goes next. And let's continue brainstorming about how to become real seafood influencers.

**Adriana Sanchez** [00:43:28] Thank you, Julie. I'm excited about SAGE and this podcast. Thank you for having me. Yes, we need to go viral so we'll, I'm sure we'll figure that out, but thank you, everyone.

[00:43:39] You're welcome.

**Speaker 3** [00:43:43] The 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 performed by Satan's pilgrims. Funding for the Conch Podcast is generously provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.