

## The Conch Sz1Ep8EmilyDeSousaCOMPLETE.mp3

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:00:04] Hello, my name is Julie Kuchepatov and I'm the host of this podcast, The Conch. We're moving along on our journey with this podcast, talking about seafood and the ocean. And most importantly, we're showcasing some of the most incredible women working in the seafood sector, sharing their journeys, examining the challenges they face and the triumphs they've achieved. Today, we are so excited to have a wonderful guest joining us, Emily De Souza. Emily is a fisheries scientist, a content creator, and a science communicator based in Canada. So we're going international again. I'm excited about that, actually. Her website, Seaside with Emily, established in 2015, is a platform to document her travels and diving adventures around the world. So today, Seaside with Emily has grown into an online education platform that teaches the world about healthy oceans, sustainable seafood, and culinary adventures focused on the rise of pescaturism, which, by the way, we should ask about too, so welcome and thank you, Emily, for joining me today on the Conch. Let's do this.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:01:04] Yeah, thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here. This is a really exciting podcast. I mentioned earlier that I was binge listening to a couple of episodes, and I feel so honored to finally have the opportunity to be part of it. It is really cool. So thank you.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:01:18] Yeah. Well, thank you so much for agreeing to be on. I know I just like, I made some like snarky comment to you on Instagram because I think you were talking about your goals and it's really cool, if you don't follow Seaside with Emily on Instagram, you definitely should, because she is just a wealth of information around seafood and sustainability and fisheries and science and wine, of course, and tourism, pescaturism, apparently, we'll talk about that in a second, but you were talking about your goals and you're very open about kind of how you run your business and your personal goals. And so I said something to you, like one of your goals should be to be on the podcast the Conch and you're like, Yes, come on. I'm like let's do it.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:01:56] Yes, exactly. Yeah, we manifested it and we made it happen. Honestly, I think it's going to be one of the coolest goals that I achieved this year.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:02:04] Oh, that's sweet of you. I mean, considering also again, like I said, I'm following you on Instagram, you do some amazing stuff. So that's a real honor to have you say that. So again, you know, we talked about some of your goals and how you're so open with them online. And it's really clear to me that you have, you know, really ambitious goals, especially with Seaside with Emily, which is your business and your consultancy and your online education platform. So you travel, you know, and share your experiences and seafood destinations around the world, which that's the pescaturism that we're talking about, I'm assuming, right?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:02:33] Mm hmm. Yeah, exactly. Basically, you know, like we talk about food travel and pescaturism is basically just seafood travel.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:02:42] Yep, that makes sense. That totally makes sense. I love it. So you're a fisheries scientist and you're a consultant with the FAO, which is the Food and Agriculture Organization, a global, you know, organization. So can you give us a little bit of your background and how you ended up where you are today?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:02:58] Yeah, definitely. So I think my sort of love for seafood definitely goes all the way back to my familial roots. So I'm based in Canada, but my family is actually from the Azore Islands off the coast of Portugal. And so, as you can imagine, a small, tiny island chain of nine islands, very dependent on seafood for food security for coastal economies. And so growing up, even though I grew up in Canada, those cultural traditions that focused on seafood were always such a big part of my life. Growing up, I was always eating seafood from a very young age. I was never one of those kids that grew up thinking seafood was weird. I ate it all the time. It was such a core component of our family functions and our traditions and different religious events and whatnot. And so I was surrounded by seafood for my entire life, and I also think that those roots in the Azores Islands is where my love of the ocean comes from. Growing up, I was always curious about the oceans. I was eager to explore the underwater world. I became a scuba diver and eventually PADI divemaster and becoming a diver really inspired me, I think, to pursue sustainability and environmental education in school. And so that sort of, I guess, is how my journey maybe more formally began. I started my undergrad at the University of Guelph in environmental governance, so that program was basically looking. It was a combination of environmental science, policy and economics. So this really nice interdisciplinary program that focused on environmental sustainability. And of course, having a love for the ocean. I tried to apply as much of what I was learning in that program to marine conservation and marine policy. And so I was learning about various environmental issues, always taking that ocean-based lens to it. And I really think one of the key points in my career, I think not a lot of people are able to identify maybe like the moment when their career pivoted or changed. And for me, this moment is so clear, and it's definitely the moment where seafood really became the focus of my existence, pretty much, and that was when I was actually volunteering with a marine conservation organization and probably my second or third year of university. And there was this really alarming narrative that sustainable seafood or seafood in general was not part of marine conservation or was not part of healthy oceans, and that if you ate seafood, you couldn't be an ocean conservationist and you didn't care about the oceans because there was just no way that you could eat seafood sustainably. And so hearing this, you know, at that point, being probably 19 years old, I was. It was quite jarring because I felt such a conflict because I was thinking about, you know, my family in the Azores Islands, all the seafood that is so important to our traditions and our way of life and thinking about, you know, the small scale fishermen who obviously need those fisheries for their economies and their livelihoods on those islands and then also thinking about the sustainability of the oceans. It was just a lot, I think, for me at once. And I didn't quite believe like there wasn't a way that you could eat from the ocean sustainably. I knew that there definitely was a way, like I said, thinking about those people on those islands and the fishermen that I knew and how they were always talking about conservation and being great stewards for the ocean. I always say fishermen are the greatest stewards of the ocean. Overfishing is horrible for job security. And so anyway, that was just kind of one of the moments of my life that I pinpoint is when I really began to focus on sustainable seafood. And eventually that led me to grad school, where I furthered my education, fishery science and then of course, recognized this horrible gap in communication between scientists and the general public, and that there's so much wonderful research and progress being made in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and the average consumer just doesn't know about it for various different reasons. You know, scientists aren't communicating it or don't know how to communicate it effectively. And so that's really when I brought all of that sustainable seafood education and knowledge on to my digital platform because I already had an existing audience on Seaside with Emily from my travel blog and my adventures around the world. And luckily, I

feel very fortunate that so many people stayed with me from the transition to focusing a little bit less on travel, still focusing on travel, but more so on sustainable seafood, and I realized that there was a huge appetite for that type of content. And so, yeah, that's led me to where I am today, a long winded version of my journey. I apologize.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:07:20] No, that's great. And that's what this podcast is for is to hear people's journeys. So I have a few things to say. I mean, first of all, that's incredible. And you know, I think, you know, science communication is an art, and I think there needs to be more attention paid to it because consumers don't know what's happening and they don't know and consumers have so much power, and that's another thing that they don't know. So you're really successful at bringing these really complex messages to distilling them down into really chewable, I guess, digestible facts, which congratulations for that because I mean, it's hard and I applaud you. And then, you know, so when you mentioned the marine conservation organization that said you can't eat seafood, I hear that narrative quite a bit. And of course, I'm not even going to bring up Seaspiracy because you've done a really good job also of debunking that. I call it a docudrama. And if people, listeners, are interested in hearing your thoughts on that, they can go and check in on your website, right or on your social media. Where would they find something like that?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:08:16] Yeah. So the easiest is probably my website because I actually have a Seaside with Emily.com/Seaspiracy is probably the easiest way where you can spend time scrolling through my social media feed, but the website might be the easiest bet.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:08:28] That's perfect. I did debate in my head talking about that, and I'm like, I'm done talking about like, I don't want to even think about it anymore. And then, by the way, I've been to the Azores, the pronunciation you're pronouncing it, I'm assuming in the correct way, right? Azores?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:08:43] The Portuguese way, Azores. I mean, Azores, yeah, it's all the same.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:08:48] So I've been there, believe it or not. So there's an organization called the International Pole and Line Foundation and their motto is "one by one fish", and they support pole and line fishermen and fisheries, where one man, generally it's a man, fishes one fish at a time. And so that's like, you know, the most sustainable way you could actually take a fish out of water. And it's really incredible fishing. So they focus on tuna fisheries, specifically all over the world and even some in Oregon, where I am at, right, there are one by one albacore tuna fishers here, which is pretty crazy to think about it. But they held their first one by one tuna conference. It was in twenty eighteen, maybe. So I went there for that and it was so great. It's so beautiful there, and the food was amazing and the people were incredible. It was really, really great. And I did become for a brief time at the airport, the sardine queen of Portugal when I sat on some weird throne.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:09:42] I love it.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:09:43] It was pretty fun.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:09:44] Yeah, they're so beautiful, those islands. I'm finally heading back this summer. I try to go every year. And then, of course, because of COVID, travel

plans got pushed back. But I'm finally going back this year, hopefully for a month or so. So I'm really excited. Yeah, the people. The food. It's just such a nice, very slow, laid back way of living. Everyone kind of like looks out for one another and just like enjoys good food, good wine, good weather. It's just wonderful. I would love to just live that life every day.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:10:17] Yeah. Hello? I would too. So again, you know, we mentioned that you're very active and really, really doing a wonderful job of getting messages out around sustainability and sustainable seafood, specifically on social media. And at one point, I think after you recently finished grad school, which, by the way, congratulations because I think you did that in the middle of the pandemic, right? I mean.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:10:37] Yes. Yeah. Yeah, thank you. Yeah.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:10:40] I have two daughters. But one finished college last year too and so it was not easy for her. So I can imagine, especially, you know, grad school's kicking it up a notch, right? So I'm sure it was difficult. So congratulations on that. But you mentioned that you were going to focus on your business and your consultancy, Seaside with Emily. And so I'm curious as to what has driven your decision to kind of double down on your consultancy and, you know, why not work for a company? I mean, how does being a consultant work for you? Because in my case, I've never been a consultant in my life. I've always worked for a company, right? And I lost my job in the early days of the pandemic in April of 2020, and so I was kind of forced into it because I couldn't find a job, actually. So, you know, and of course, it led to SAGE. So I'm not complaining. I'm actually very happy this happened because I wouldn't be sitting in this chair right now, frankly, if that didn't happen. But what made you decide to just really focus on your consultancy? I'm so curious.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:11:36] Mm-Hmm. Yeah, I think I just have this naturally entrepreneurial spirit. I think that also comes from my family. My parents own their own business, and they've run their own business now for over a decade. I think it's been 12 or 13 years. And so I was a teenager when I witnessed that transition that they made from working at their own individual companies to coming together to starting this business. And you know, I saw how it came together from starting out in the basement with two computers to growing into, you know, the international company that it is today. And I think it was just really inspiring to see like them take hold of their careers like that. And I maybe didn't realize that at the time, and I actually was kind of just reflecting on this before we hopped on the call, like where this entrepreneurial spirit really came from it. Yeah, I definitely don't think I realized that at the time, but I think witnessing them make that shift and fight through different obstacles and challenges and then finally, like arrive at this point in their life where, you know, they have freedom to travel freely, to spend time with us, even, you know, growing up, they always had the opportunity to come to our like hockey games and whatnot. And that was because they built a certain life for themselves because they took, you know, on that entrepreneurial journey. And so I think that really inspired me was I realized that I wanted to live a certain way. You know, I had this passion for travel instilled in me. I wanted to see the world, I wanted to experience things. And I think the thought of just like sitting at a desk from nine to five honestly just scared me so much that I was like, I need to find another way to do this. And like I said, I was very fortunate and very lucky that I had my parents as an example that that was possible. And yeah, my younger brother, you know, he's very entrepreneurial as well, especially in the sustainability space, doing a lot of great work in different ventures related to single-use plastic. So I think, yeah, my parents kind of instilled this entrepreneurial spirit in me and I knew like I wanted to be

my own boss and create that life for myself. And so like I started Seaside with Emily, it was actually called Airplanes and Avocados back in 2015 when I initially started and I literally started it in my dorm room. I was at the University of Ottawa at the time and my first year of university, and I had taken a gap year in between high school and university to travel. And I was supposed to be soul searching and didn't quite pan out. And so I ended up starting university actually for something completely different. I went for exercise science because I had played sports growing up and I thought, Oh, this is natural. And I ended up failing human anatomy in my first semester. So I realized pretty quickly that wasn't going to work for me. And so I was actually feeling like really lost. And so that's kind of how I started my blog. I was just like, I want to travel the world. I want to share stories like, this is what I want to do with my life. And at that point, I really didn't even know like how to make it a career, but I was just doing it. And then over the years, I figured out how to monetize and how to sort of focus on my niche. You know, going from travel to sustainable travel and then to seafood travel and now sustainable seafood and going through these journeys to get to a point where I can actually build a business. So I've been doing this as a side hustle for over six years now. And yeah, I graduated from my master's, where I finished my masters in October 2020, and my intention was always to go full time with my business. Like that was always the goal was that, you know, I've been doing this as a side hustle for six years. I was ready to take the leap and my intention was to go full time with it in January of 2022. And I just ended up being really fortunate that, like I said, people had such an appetite for the sustainable seafood content that it was just doing so well, and my business was really successful that I was actually just able to finish my masters in October and take my business full time right out of the gate, I was actually kind of operating full time as I was like defending my thesis. It was a bit hectic in October because I had already kind of made that jump. But yeah, I was just really eager to be my own boss. And like I said, to create a certain lifestyle for myself. I also think I just love working on a lot of different projects with different clients like, I don't know if I have a short attention span or if I just like to mix it up every once in a while, but I really love being able to, like, work on shorter term contracts with different clients. And one month I'm working on a project related to small-scale fisheries and international trade. And then the next month I'm looking at sustainable aquaculture and it just keeps me on my toes and I really like that. And then the last thing I will say also about the decision to remain an independent sort of contractor or consultant as opposed to working for a company is that I think there's a lot of value in doing that as a scientist. One thing that I've noticed being on social media is that these days, the average consumer or the general public is very skeptical of messaging that comes from industry. And I mean, I don't necessarily think that's always a great thing. You know, I think obviously the industry has to market themselves and put out messaging, but there is this discourse like, well, of course, this company is going to say that, they're trying to sell more fish. And so there is this sort of like skepticism from the consumer when messaging comes from industry. And so I think by remaining this sort of neutral third party who's independent of an academic institution or independent of a company that I don't know if it gives me more credibility, but I think it's a different sense of credibility with the average consumer that I think has really helped me build a certain level of trust with my audience that I'm not quite sure I would have been able to do if I had official ties to a specific company.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:16:47] Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, and I really love the fact that, you know, you give your parents a shout out and how much they inspired you to begin your own kind of journey in entrepreneurship because I think about that I mentioned I have two kids and I think about them. I mean, everything I do is for them, right? So, you know, when I was thinking about starting SAGE, I was, well, my oldest daughter, she's like,

you know you're going to be working really, really hard. And I'm like, I've always worked hard. Like, yes, of course I'll be working hard, but this also, like you said, gives you the freedom to be able to pick and choose, you know what you're going to do. I mean, I'm talking about SAGE as if it's a consultancy. It's actually, you know, a legitimate business/nonprofit, but I'm still the only one running it, right? So in a sense, I'm still a consultant and I do have the freedom to do what I want to do, right, and also take time for myself when I feel overwhelmed without having anybody, you know, go, hey, you're not making your quotas or your margins or whatever, you know, they're going to say in business. So I really appreciate the freedom that this brings. But I mean, with it comes great responsibility too.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:17:48] Mm-Hmm. It's definitely a balancing act. The first couple of months that I was full time, I felt a bit like, oh my God, like the rug is officially pulled out from under me. Like, there's no safety net. Like there's no guarantee like salary or income anymore. Like, yeah, I'm responsible for everything now. And it was definitely a bit scary, but like you said, like, there's a lot of freedom that comes with it as well that I think makes those scarier, overworked or stressful moments totally worth it.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:18:12] Yeah, for sure. Well, we talked earlier about science communication and you know, I've worked with a lot of fish scientists specifically in my day when I was working with wild salmon. And it's definitely, you know, a challenge to communicate science. And scientists also have challenges. Of course, I'm not making a blanket statement about all scientists, but it's challenging, right? And so at my previous job, one of the things that I had to do was work with fishing companies that sometimes were run by fishermen, and it was a real challenge working with them because an overwhelming amount of them didn't know how to market themselves, which I think is an opportunity for you, right? That's a good thing. That's good for you because it provides job security, probably. But I was really shocked. I mean, some of them didn't even have websites. And you know, that might have changed now since we have gone completely, you know, almost 100 percent virtual since the pandemic started. But I mean, do you find this to be the case in your conversations with fishing companies? And how can we get them to understand like the real critical importance of communication and marketing because, you know, we really need to change consumer behavior around seafood, which, you know, we've talked about also and it has to start with them really ramping up their communications about seafood's kind of positive attributes. What do you think in your experience?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:19:27] Yeah, I think you've hit the nail on the head. There's been a sort of not disregard, but this treatment of marketing and communications is a bit of an afterthought. I think this happens also in a lot of industries. But the seafood industry, of course, you know, this is what we're talking about and has been, I think, pretty bad as an industry that I think really needs marketing and communications, maybe more so than other industries. Like you said, we need to communicate with consumers, especially when you have all of these anti-seafood activists or people, you know, making these types of films and other things. Those people are very good at marketing and communications, and they're sharing information that is not correct, and so when you have people that's sharing false information, but in a way that is very effective in reaching consumers, it doesn't matter what they're saying, really at the end of the day, if they're communicating effectively. And I think like the seafood industry has maybe felt, I don't know if they felt like indestructible or untouchable because these people are sharing information that's not true, but there's been this mindset like we can just kill them with facts. But if you're not

communicating facts in a way that resonates with people, nobody's listening to what you're saying. And so, yeah, I think there's definitely been this disregard of marketing and communications for a very long time, though I do think that the tide is changing. I think people are coming around much more and recognizing the importance of communication. I think that film that we're not going to talk about, I think also like scared a lot of people. It made the industry realize like, holy, you know, we don't have a cohesive message, we don't have a strategy. And I think that also revealed like the negative impacts of being reactive rather than proactive because even a lot of the industry response, like I said, people are very skeptical of industry messaging and even more so when that industry messaging comes late. You know, if the activists or the people who are saying that, you know, seafood is the worst thing on the planet come out swinging first and then the industry has to respond. It's always going to look like industry is on the defensive. And so we really need to be more proactive with marketing and communications. And like I said, I think that film really scared a lot of people and made them realize that the importance of marketing/comms and I think people are coming around to it. You know, there was a Changing Taste's webinar that I think we were both on last week or a couple of weeks ago. And I think they really also emphasized the importance of good storytelling in seafood communications and the need for specific messaging around things like sustainability in order to reach specific consumers and certain demographics. And so it was really uplifting for me to hear that people are talking more and more about how do we share this information? How do we reach the consumer in an effective way? You know, in my own work, I think what I do is also sort of proving to people who have been putting marketing and comms on the backburner that this is important and effective. I think I've demonstrated my value in what I do with various different brands and companies and organizations that I've worked with. And then other organizations are seeing that and realizing like, oh, you know, this TikTok thing. it's not just, you know, silly kids dancing around, you know, like, there's something here, there's a real value here. There's a return on investment, like this is an effective way to communicate information. And so I think we need more people doing what I do. I'm obviously only one person and I can't, you know, share every single seafood story out there. And so I think more and more people are also coming around to the role of social media and communication and recognizing that this isn't just a cute thing that teenagers do, that this is a really effective way to communicate, and I think people are becoming increasingly more aware of it and appreciative of its value.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:23:00] Yeah, I hope so, because again, like I said, I mean, in my previous job, I struggled to really get the companies that I was working with to understand the value in actually telling these stories, you know, and I think part of the issue is the history of the sustainable seafood movement has really been environmentally focused. I fully admit I'm part of this history of the sustainable seafood movement, so, you know, very environmentally focused. And then, you know, when in 2014, when these articles came out in The Guardian and The Associated Press around child labor and forced labor in Thai shrimp processing in Thailand, there was shock reverberations around the world and specifically in the sustainable seafood movement, where people are like, oh, hey, hello, there are people behind these fisheries and these fish farms and the processing. And we need to understand not only what's happening environmentally, but we need to understand what's happening with the people. And we also need to understand the implications behind the environmental work that we're doing to people. We're doing great work to support and build the environmental sustainability of these fisheries and fish farms. But some of this work might actually be harming people, literally harming people. So this has been, you know, a real challenge. And so it all comes back to communicating about that and telling the stories of the people behind this. You know, I was talking with Monique Coombs on this

very podcast, and she mentioned, you know, that the USDA, which is the US Department of Agriculture and all over their website, they have pictures of farmers holding carrots and cabbages, whereas on the NOAA website they have no photos of fishermen holding fish. You know, again, it's about this messaging and the communications around people behind the food I think is so important and it's really, really effective if you want people to care about this product, essentially this raw material, you really have to put a face behind it because it is, you know, harvested and processed and cared for by people. Another thing I wanted to mention is that in the U.S., specifically Linda Cornish from the Seafood Nutrition Partnership, who I think partnered with Arlin Wasserman on that Changing Tastes webinar, at least I know they partnered together. So Arlin is informing some of the work on Seafood Nutrition Partnership. She is spearheading an effort to create a national campaign for seafood in the U.S., and it's very akin to the pork industry. If you remember the slogan "the other white meat" or the beef industry like "What's for dinner?" Was that a beef slogan? I can't remember, but beef, it's what's for dinner is what's for dinner? I don't remember actually. Seafood Nutrition Partnership is not part of the industry. It's a nonprofit, but it really is pushing this effort that we need to get people to eat more seafood. And to do that, we need to have some sort of national campaign around the benefits of eating seafood. And so I am super excited for that effort because I totally agree. I mean, putting some strong messages around the benefits of seafood and the benefits of the profession for livelihoods is really necessary. And by the way, I mean, there's even a national avocado industry organization like, hello. Avocados are great, but I mean, do they really need their own organization? I know.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:26:04] Oh, that's funny. Yeah. And you know, the Seafood Nutrition Partnership, I will say, like, kudos to them. They're doing a lot of cool stuff. I'm very envious. I've been trying to get the Canadian government to do something similar or make some sort of investment in some similar education and marketing, like nationwide educational programs about seafood here in Canada. And I'm so envious of what they're doing over there because it's so smart. Like you said, it puts people into this sustainable seafood conversation like, who's catching your fish? What are the health benefits? For a lot of people at the end of the day, sustainability isn't always important. They're worried about their health. You know where they're worried about human rights. And that's also a part of communications, right? It's figuring out what appeals to your consumer. If they don't care about ocean sustainability or, you know, the marine ecosystem, what do they care about? Oh, they care about raising healthy children. So let's talk to them about the health benefits of seafood for kids, you know? And so I think the Seafood Nutrition Partnership is a really great, great tool. I'm very jealous. I hope we can one day replicate it here in Canada.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:27:03] Yeah. Well, maybe that will go North American wide. Who knows? I mean, yeah, I agree. I was shocked actually, to hear that we didn't have some sort of national campaign. And by the way, we did have one in the U.S., but it was like 40 years ago, a really long time ago. So I want to ask a question. I want to ask about the challenges of being a young woman in seafood. So I'm going to name the elephant in the room. At least it's my room. It's in my room, ok, it's not. Maybe not in your room. But you're exactly half my age. I think you mentioned when you had your last birthday on social media. Of course I'm paying attention to how old you are, and I figured it out. I'm like, Oh my gosh, I am exactly twice your age, which is awesome, by the way, I love being old, so I'm not complaining. So when I started SAGE, I heard this really horrifying statistic that it takes people over the age of 50 on average 10 months to find a job. And that statistic was from earlier times before COVID, before a global pandemic. So that's not even taking into



consideration the crazy times that we're in right now. And I think, you know, people, we're in the middle of this what's being called the great resignation, and people are quitting their jobs because they're fed up with working conditions and they have absolutely every right to do that and to feel that way. And we should all be having careers that are healthy and satisfying and that pay us a fair wage. But, you know, it was really hard for me to reconcile with that. And so I was thinking about you and I realize you're an independent consultant and you know you're an entrepreneur. And I'm wondering, has age affected your success? And you know, you mentioned TikTok. So I think age definitely is part of that. Although I have to say I do see some older women on TikTok killing it. I just throw that out there that it's not necessarily for young people. So tell me what you think.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:28:52] Yeah. The age has definitely been interesting, I suppose. Yeah, I was thinking about this a bit before we hopped on and how age has played a role in my success. And honestly, I think it's maybe been a bigger factor than I would have anticipated before I kind of got into this. But for a lot of different reasons and like you said, TikTok being one of them, I will say I think it's had more positive benefits than any negative consequences, I think. You know, sometimes occasionally I'll get the weird social media comment of somebody, you know, trying to claim that I'm not an expert because I'm only twenty-six or I only have those kinds of crazy things which I try not to take to heart. I usually just kind of block those people because they're not providing any valuable discussion. But I think the age has helped me. You know, being a young person in seafood has helped me more than anything. And a lot of it is, like you said, because of TikTok and social media and understanding better ways to communicate with a younger audience. I think on that Changing Tastes webinar as well, they mentioned the role of millennials, which I was very excited to hear as well, that many more people were now taking into consideration. Because when I started talking about seafood on my platforms and reaching out to companies and brands, there was a bit of pushback at first because there was this sort of perception that millennials are budget shoppers. They're too cheap to buy seafood or they don't eat seafood or they eat fast food or takeout. And I mean, I guess pre-pandemic seafood was not really part of the takeout conversation until COVID really forced it to be. But there was a bit of pushback because people didn't think that millennials were eating seafood, which to me was insane because, you know, millennials make up the largest buying power in the market. There are a lot of us and there is clear evidence as that Changing Tastes webinar demonstrated that millennials are buying more seafood, and we are the ones really driving the shift towards more seafood consumption. And, more importantly, towards sustainable seafood consumption. You know, if you ask a millennial today, what's their number one consideration when they buy not even just seafood, but any food? Most of us are thinking about the environmental impact of our food choices, whereas previous generations, older generations might put a heavier emphasis on health benefits or on costs. Millennials were really concerned about the environment. And a lot of that is because we've been raised with a lot of climate anxiety and a lot of stress about the future of our planet. And so for us, the environmental impact of our food choices is very important, which is why I think it's so important that the seafood industry really begins speaking better to young people. Because, as we know, seafood is a really climate friendly protein. It is a great choice in terms of environmental sustainability and reducing our carbon footprint and emissions, and we need to do a better job of communicating that with young people. And so I think being a young person, obviously, you know, thinking like a young person and understanding how to communicate with young people has really been an asset because, I mean, to put it bluntly, a lot of the seafood industry is old white men who have no idea how to use TikTok or what Instagram is or how to hashtag or go live. You know, all of these little things that are just frankly like part of the everyday life of a

millennial or a young person. And so like I said, I think the industry is becoming more aware of the importance of proper marketing and communication and now also recognizing that young people are such a driving force and so bringing those two things together. The role of social media is becoming increasingly more important. And so having somebody like me who's a young person who knows how to hop on TikTok trends and, you know, apply these silly dance videos to seafood information is really valuable and it's really an asset. I will say that it is a bit concerning to me sometimes, like I think about like, will I still have that value or competitive advantage in 20 years? So I think one thing that I'm really working on this year is trying to pass on my knowledge and skills in this space to future scientists and future science communicators. I'm working on developing some training programs focused on science communication for the seafood industry to basically keep this momentum going that I think I've started and a few other scientists in the space have started with leveraging things like TikTok and Instagram to communicate seafood information in a way that's effective for young people. So I'm trying to develop some training programs that will help fisheries scientists and other people in the seafood space figure out how to establish a personal brand and leverage, like I said, these TikTok trends and silly social media things to be more effective communicators for the seafood industry because I think it is so important that we do continue to leverage these platforms to recognize their values and, of course, to engage with young people who are becoming increasingly more important in the market in the sustainable seafood movement and are really driving this overall shift towards sustainability just generally in our everyday lives.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:33:42] Yeah, that's so great. And I can't wait to see what you come up with in this toolkit or these guidance documents or what are you calling it? Sorry.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:33:51] So I'm trying to do some trainings, ideally like some online courses. Yeah, something like that. A little bit more engaging. And yeah, we're still in the early stages of mapping it out. But I'll count this as me manifesting it and speaking it into existence.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:34:05] Yeah. So let's manifest that because again, I do think that is super important, and passing on knowledge is huge and, in fact, that actually is a really great segue into my next question because again, passing on knowledge and mentorship, which is what this question is about. So in the episode of the Conch featuring Adriana Sanchez, she mentioned that she had a hard time finding women mentors in the seafood industry. And to clarify, she found plenty of men mentors and plenty of women mentors on the nonprofit side, but she couldn't really find a woman with tenure in the industry to support her and mentor her. And so have you found this to be the case or you know, you mentioned you're making these training materials to pass on to others? That's kind of a lateral thing, right? So have you found someone to mentor you or are you even looking for that?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:34:54] Yeah, this is a really great question, and I will say that I was very fortunate in my grad school experience, I worked in a phenomenal lab. My direct supervisor was a man, Dr. Phil Loring, but he worked very closely with a postdoctoral scholar, Dr. Hannah Harrison, and she was a phenomenal mentor to me. Again, I think this is one of those things I realized in hindsight as I was thinking about this question, because I know, you know, when you're in the thick of things, sometimes mentors can kind of butt heads and you challenge each other. And, you know, she definitely sometimes told me things that I needed to hear but didn't really want to hear, which I think is exactly what made her a great mentor. You know, I didn't have any first-hand experience in the fishing

industry per se other than having a family so closely tied to seafood in terms of culture. But I didn't come from a fishing family. I'd never been on a fishing boat and there was a lot of imposter syndrome very early in my grad school career because of that, especially, you know, some of my first times interacting with fishermen, I was very nervous about how they would respond to this young woman who, frankly at that point, really didn't know anything about the fishing industry and, Hannah, she really made me feel more comfortable and confident in what I was doing. And she provided a lot of just like guidance herself being from a fishing background. You know, she's a fisherman as well as a scholar, and she just really mentored me and took me under her wing and pushed me into situations, you know, even before I was ready and kind of like forced me to learn very quickly. And so I was definitely very fortunate to have her as a mentor in grad school. Now running my own business and, you know, being outside of academia, it is a bit different, I think finding women mentors, it's definitely something that I am on the look for. I will say, because being an entrepreneur is a very lonely space sometimes. And so especially this year, recently, I've made it a really big goal of mine. I was actually listening to Adriana's episode and thinking I should reach out to her because we should connect and be accountability buddies because I'm looking for more women, specifically women entrepreneurs in the seafood space to connect with because it is definitely difficult to find women in this space, especially women in leadership roles in my experience is a lot of the companies and organizations that I've worked with, a lot of most of them have been men who have hired me or brought me on as a consultant. And so I was really reflecting on that as I listened to Adriana's episode as well. And I think that is partly why doing things like creating training programs is so important to continue this cycle or start, I guess, the cycle of mentorship in the seafood industry for women. Because no shade to the men, I know they have definitely, you know, great insights and guidance and mentorship to offer. There is real value in seeing somebody who looks like you and shares a similar life experience providing that mentorship. And so I think it is really important and it's definitely something that I think this podcast is really helping to amplify is the importance of having women in those leadership roles and the sort of trickle down effects of it.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:37:49] Yeah, that's a really great point. And by the way, I do encourage you to reach out to Adriana because she's super friendly and she's really cool. And, you know, she has four kids, so she's busy, but she's amazing and a good friend. So I definitely recommend that. But again, you know, no shade to the men at all like men as mentors are great and I do agree with you that they should definitely continue to do that and seek out opportunities to mentor young people of all genders, right? So, you know, and that's one of the future ambitions of SAGE is to provide a platform for women to find each other and create a kind of mentorship relationships or mentor/ mentee relationships. And I don't know if I mentioned it on this podcast, but prior to starting SAGE, I was doing a lot of research and due diligence about this, and I talked to many people and one was a high level woman in the seafood industry and she said, you know, I would love to be a mentor, it's just I actually don't know how. And so I think SAGE can really provide an opportunity for women to feel confident in being a mentor, and also can feel confident in being a mentor and also confident in, you know, mentoring someone and then being a mentee as well. So aside from, you know, creating mentorship opportunities, if you're able to come up with anything, actually, what else do you think SAGE can do to support women in seafood?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:39:02] Yeah, you know, I think this podcast is a phenomenal way to support women in seafood because I think it highlights sort of the different opportunities that exist in the seafood industry. Like, I'm just thinking most recently about, you know, my

story here. Obviously, what I do in seafood is very unconventional. My job is not going to come up on any, you know, career aptitude test or anything like that. And same with what Adriana does too, just listening to her episode yesterday, like she obviously has a very unique role in what she does in her consultancy as well. And so I think that this podcast amplifying some of those more unconventional or lesser known jobs, even, you know, Chef Charlotte, people might not think that being a chef is a way to engage in the seafood industry or the sustainable seafood movement. But obviously, Chef Charlotte is a great example of how she's really leveraging her position to support sustainable seafood. And so I think that this podcast is really amplifying the unique and different opportunities in the seafood industry. You know, beyond being a fisherman or working in a processing plant like there are so many ways to engage. I think that is really empowering for women to see, you know, that they can likely already harness the skills and the knowledge and the experiences that they have and bring that over to the seafood industry, which honestly we need because this industry really needs fresh perspectives. It needs people doing something different, like what I'm doing, what Adriana is doing, what Chef Charlotte is doing. We need those people bringing that outside perspective and those different ideas. I think that's what's going to shape the industry in the future. And I think that women just have this ability to think creatively and outside of the box that I think is so valuable to the seafood industry. And I think that this podcast amplifying that and showcasing the diversity of roles that women play in the seafood industry is, I think, just going to be such a big driver of change for the seafood industry and the role of women in the industry.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:40:45] Well, that's amazing. Thank you. I love doing this podcast and I think I mentioned yesterday on social media. I'm like, I never thought I would be a podcaster, ever. I don't even know if I could call myself actually a podcaster, but guess what, I am. So.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:40:56] Definitely.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:40:57] I'm going to call myself that. But yeah, I mean, I never thought I would be doing this, and I agree it is to showcase the breadth and the depth of opportunities for anyone that are in this industry. And I never am short of amazement about the types of jobs and the things that people do and the experiences they have and the stories. So yeah, I'm going to continue to do this as long as I can. So thank you for those really kind words. So SAGE is about building gender equality and empowering women in the seafood industry. Clearly, SAGE stands for Seafood and Gender Equality, so that's our mission. Can you share one or two aspects of the seafood industry and its culture that may contribute to inequality in the sector in your experience or something that you've seen or maybe just noticed? What are some of the things that the industry can do to lessen these inequalities, in your opinion?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:41:44] Mm-Hmm. Yeah. I think the thing that I would mention is, honestly, we've kind of talked about it quite a bit already, but the role of marketing and communications, I think, is in the seafood industry, I think in most industries, is often a position held by women. And I think the fact that marketing and communications is constantly dismissed or, like I said, treated like an afterthought. And I think this is also something Adriana mentioned as well as, you know, marketing and comms is kind of this like cute little thing. The men will, you know, do all the big, important jobs, and we'll put all of our investments in our budgets into, you know, innovation and tech and infrastructure, which of course, are all important things. And then it comes to marketing and comms and it's, oh, we've got, you know, that lady over there doing it. And, you know, it's kind of an

afterthought and there's not much attention paid to it. So I think the fact that we do treat marketing and comms as an afterthought and the fact that those roles are very often held by women is one way that I see inequality perpetuated in this industry. And I think the way that we change that is by recognizing the value of marketing and comms like, I feel like a broken record a bit, but I think that that is so important and especially when we have women in these roles who frankly, women are just brilliant communicators like I think I don't know if it's fair to say that we're far more effective than men, but I think that women are brilliant communicators and that role should not be dismissed the way that it has been. And like I said, I do think that the industry is getting a bit better in recognizing the importance of marketing and comms and not just treating it like this cute little afterthought. But I think that really emphasizing the importance of communications and really giving women the opportunity to speak in these large rooms and share their ideas and bring their creativity and their creative communication and marketing ideas forward. I think that if women in these comms roles were really given the space that they deserve, the seafood industry would look a lot different today.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:43:32] You nailed that one on the head. That is great because, you know, I mentioned there's a few partnerships and collaborations that I'm involved in, and they're all around marketing and communications, and they are almost entirely women. And so we don't have hard figures. That's something that SAGE is going to actually try to conduct some sort of survey or figure it out somehow so it's statistically relevant and as accurate as can be because we don't have figures around how many women are working, how many people, you know, and then sex disaggregated data, right, around how many women or people of any gender, for that matter, are in the seafood industry. And we know there's very few women at the CEO level and that can be counted, right? But the rest, we just have no idea, and I used a proxy to figure out. So I think it's about 70 percent of people in marketing and communications are women. So of the seafood industry, don't quote me on that as a reliable statistic, but that's the one that I'm working on. That's my working statistic that I actually believe is pretty close. I mean, based in my anecdotal experience. So I love that answer that you just gave. And I fully agree that by placing value and importance in the communication and marketing of seafood, which is, I mean, how else do you sell seafood? You have to tell people about it, right? So I mean, you have to talk about it, right and advertise about it. So. Exactly. I don't know. I mean, it's all just a mystery to me, sometimes how people think, but maybe we can talk about that on another podcast. So the goal of this podcast is really to inspire women that are working in or thinking about starting a career in the seafood sector and, you know, you really represent the woman that I envision as a listener of the Conch. I made a persona prior to starting this podcast of about what I envisioned the listener would be, and you're pretty much the listener profile that I envisioned without actually even knowing you. So thank you for listening to my podcast and being on the podcast. But what advice would you give to women already in this business or thinking about starting a career in this exciting sector?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:45:28] Mm-Hmm. I think one thing that women should do that I think a lot of women or generally people I think are hesitant to do is bring their skills and experiences from non-seafood industries into the seafood industry. I kind of mentioned this in my last response, but I really think that the seafood space needs fresh perspectives and new ideas and that we could learn a lot from other industries, you know, even from agriculture or something completely unrelated to food like how are other organizations in other spaces, you know, tech, whatever it is, how are they marketing themselves? Like, what strategies are, you know, the wine industry using to market themselves? And how could we apply wine industry marketing to the seafood industry? I think a lot of people are

sometimes hesitant to bring experiences from other fields into new industries because they are unrelated. But I think it's such a strong skill set and a strong opportunity, like I'm a huge advocate for interdisciplinary learning and knowledge. I mean, like all of my academic education has been very interdisciplinary, and all of the research teams that I've worked in have also been interdisciplinary. And I'm just always blown away that more people don't think in that interdisciplinary mindset because things are just always 10 times better when you bring 10 people with different experiences and perspectives to the table as opposed to if all 10 people are, you know, seafood industry veterans and they've been doing the same thing for 20 or 30 years like that is not how we're going to change things, it's not how we're going to move things forward. And so I would say for women who are looking to enter the seafood industry, like lean into what you already know and the knowledge and skills that you have because this space needs fresh ideas and I guarantee like the skill set and the toolbox you already have in your experiences from past industries are going to be applicable or can be transferred here and will probably result in some very exciting and cool opportunities that, like I said, like don't exist. The space really needs some things, I think, to freshen it up and more people shaking up the status quo. And so I would say be bold in that and don't shy away from it.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:47:26] That's really great advice, and I totally agree. I mean, I tend to look at other industries as well for guidance about, you know, if I'm grappling with a problem around something because, you know, like the coffee industry is a really good example of where we can find some really interesting innovations that are happening. And so, you know, I think a great example of someone coming from another sector is I think it's the CEO of High Liner Foods is from the potato industry like he wasn't in seafood, and now he's leading one of the largest seafood companies in the world. But he's from the potato industry, which I think is great. I mean, you know, the potato industry, they're pretty big, I would say. So yeah, maybe he's bringing some innovation and change to his company. I mean, I think he's definitely been steering that ship for a while. So I agree. I mean, looking at other sectors, bringing in new fresh voices, that's one of the things that SAGE is actually really trying to do as well because you did mention earlier that the seafood industry is majority run by men and overwhelmingly by white men, and they are aging out. And so, you know, they're aging out and they're creating succession plans. And these succession plans are being passed down more than likely to other men that look like them. Right. And so how can SAGE potentially be a disruptor of that and not in a way to harm the industry by any means. Again, I will say this a million times. I love this industry, and so I am here to support the industry and just make it better. And it's not about disruption to destroy, it's about disruption, you know, from a place of love. It sounds so corny, but really, you know, make it better. And by making it better, by bringing in diversity of voices and younger people, diversity, whatever. You know, if you're thinking about gender or race or culture or whatever, that will bring more innovation. And that's what we desperately, like you said, need right now, because it is pretty stale. I mean, to be honest. So, you know, we're coming to the end of our conversation. And you know, again, SAGE, I'll mention, is about uplifting and amplifying diverse voices in the seafood industry. And this podcast, again, is one of those main ways that we're doing this. This is your opportunity to uplift someone. So who would you like to uplift and why?

**Emily De Sousa** [00:49:33] Yeah. So I actually somebody comes right to the top of my mind immediately when I think about an awesome woman in seafood who needs to have her voice amplified. And that is my friend McKenzie. She's a fellow science communicator. Her Instagram is McKensea. It's MCKENSEA. It's very cute, and she's awesome. Her science communication skills are phenomenal. I definitely look to her for ways to improve

my own science communication. She talks about seafood and also other marine conservation and ocean related topics. She's also a really large advocate for women in STEM, but also for the LGBTQ+ community in STEM, and she's done a lot of work there in developing scholarships to support that community and entry into science. And she's just an incredible advocate for the oceans and really also brings the people aspect that we were speaking about earlier, you know, the people behind our seafood and where it's caught and whatnot. And so she's just phenomenal. She's based in B.C., here in Canada, and I just love her work and definitely think that more people need to check her out.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:50:36] That's great. Well, thank you. I can't wait to check her out for sure. You know, I was just driving this morning and I was listening to the radio and there was a report about the first lady of Iceland, and she's from Ottawa. Did you know that? Because I didn't know.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:50:51] No, I didn't know that.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:50:52] Yeah, her name is like Eliza Reid, and she's the first lady of Iceland. And she just released this book and I honestly, I didn't write the name down, but it's about 40 amazing women in Iceland. And so I'll put it up in the show notes, a link to it, because it's partially in Icelandic, the title of the book. But she talked about all these incredible women just from all different walks of life, you know, that are Icelandic women that are doing a lot for their country, but doing a lot for themselves and just amazing women. And so, if Eliza, who's from Canada, ever came back to Canada to write a book about amazing women in Canada, I hope she would contact you because you're an amazing woman. So I really appreciate, our time has come to an end and I really appreciate your generosity of time and coming on the show and the program. And you know, you mentioned that you know your concern for what's going to happen to you in 20 years and your relevance and I guarantee you you'll do fine, you'll be great. Thank you so much for coming on, and I so appreciate it.

**Emily De Sousa** [00:51:53] Yeah, thank you so much for having me. This is awesome. I love chatting with you. I love the work that you're doing with SAGE. I think it's phenomenal and I feel very honored to have the opportunity to be on this podcast among such an inspiring group of women. So thank you.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:52:06] You are welcome.

**Speaker 3** [00:52:10] 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.