

## The Conch Sz2Ep4 Stacy ShultzCOMPLETE.mp3

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:00:04] Hello. My name is Julie Kuchepatov and I'm the host of this podcast, The Conch. We are grooving along on our journey with this podcast, talking about seafood and the ocean. And most importantly, we're uplifting some of the most incredible women working in the seafood sector, sharing their journeys, the challenges they faced, and the triumphs they've achieved. Today, we are excited to have an amazing guest joining us, Stacy Schultz. Stacy grew up in Michigan, on the shores of Lake Huron, is the director of marketing and sustainability coordinator at Fortune Fish and Gourmet and member and former chair of Sea Pact's Advisory Council. Welcome and thank you, Stacy, for joining me today on the Conch. Let's get down to business.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:00:47] Thanks, Julie. I'm so excited to be here. I've listened to a lot of your recordings already with other guests, and I just feel so well.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:00:56] I'm so happy to have you here. And I didn't mention in the announcement of this podcast, but you are a friend and I'm so happy to have you on here and get to know a little bit more about you and why don't we get started? So, you know, you've been at Fortune Fish and Gourmet for some time now, and maybe you could tell us for how long. But as long as I've known you, I think. Right?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:01:17] Yeah.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:01:18] So can you give us a little bit of your background and how you ended up where you are today? Because I know you're not on the shores of Lake Huron anymore, right?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:01:26] That is correct. Yeah, very far from it, actually. Actually very far from any major water source now. But I started at Fortune about 11 years ago, but my industry background begins right out of college. I started an internship for the Department of Natural Resources in South Carolina. I had always been interested in fish from a young age growing up on the shores of Lake Huron, as you put it, fishing with my dad and my family also spent a lot of time in Lake Michigan fishing. So I wanted to do something with fish, right? So I got into aquaculture, which is raising fish for food. And my internship in South Carolina was at a small research facility called Waddell Mariculture Center, where they raised shrimp for research. We researched different ways of farming shrimp so that we could give feedback to local farmers, also different species. So there was shrimp and then there was also redfish and a bunch of other stuff. I stayed in this old plantation home there for I think it was like four months and on the weekends I had to feed all the ponds and I would ride a tractor and use a flare gun to keep the birds away. Super exciting, but very hot, and I felt like I needed more experience before I got out into the workforce. So I did another internship following that at Walt Disney World. In Epcot, there is the Living Seas and the Land Pavilion, and they had an advanced internship where you raise fish for the exhibit and for the restaurant in the Land Pavilion. So it was kind of under the umbrella of the Living Seas where they had the big fish tank in their restaurant. But you were next door. So there I raised tilapia, perch, striped bass and American eels and alligators. I had a small little alligator exhibit. It was pretty fun. I loved working there. I would have stayed on, but they kind of went on a hiring freeze and I was looking for a job, a permanent job after that. And there's not a lot of aquaculture in the United States. There wasn't then, and there still isn't. A lot of it is in other countries. We import a lot of it, and I was having a hard time finding a job, so I ended up applying for an aquarist position at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, which was fine. I was going to raise fish for the exhibit. Same thing I did at

Disney. Not quite aquaculture, but it worked, it fit my bill and I went interviewed at this beautiful aquarium right there on Lake Michigan in the heart of Chicago, was just super in awe of the whole place. I interviewed in front of a panel of eight, super intimidated. I don't know how I got through it, honestly. At this point in my career, I was like, Wow, I really don't know how I made that happen. But they actually wanted me for a position of a vet tech, vet technologist, because of my water quality background and my experience with pathology and doing necropsy. And for those that aren't familiar, a necropsy is basically an animal autopsy. So in any aquatic setting, you want to know why something died, why the fish died, why the snail died, because it affects the entire ecosystem of that tank. So I had some experience in that from working at Disney and like I said, the water quality background. They were very excited about that. And I'm like, Well, you know, we can teach you the rest of the stuff, like how to draw blood, you know, how to take x-rays. So that was kind of intriguing to me because it not only would I be going in with some background, but to learn and then 911 came and that that was pretty crazy. I thought for sure they were going to let me go. It was hard because they had let go equivalent of 50 full time positions while I was there. But because I was in the health department, it would have been, you know, essentially a PR nightmare to let anyone go from there. So, you know, here I was coming in new and they're having to let people go that had been there for, you know, ten, 15 years. So it really affected me and made me work harder for my job, you know, since those that have lost it, yeah, it was a super great place to work. I worked at a restaurant cause, you and I know science really doesn't pay and not just for women, but for all of us in that science industry. You know, you just have a bachelors degree. There's not a lot of money out there. So I got a job at a seafood restaurant at night in the heart of Chicago. Shaw's Crab House. One of my close friends from high school, she was a manager there at the time, and I got in it being a hostess so that I could meet people, make friends, was new to the area. I worked there for almost a year while I was working at the Shedd. I would literally take care of fish and make them healthy during the day and then work at a restaurant that sold them at night. One of the other girls there called me aquagirl and still does to this day. So I had two jobs. And then I got interested in pathology more, learning, why things did what they did and how they passed on, and what we could do to make the collection better. And I got hired on by the University of Illinois Zoo Pathology Program. They were the folks that came in and did all of the necropsies for each one of the local institutions for the Shedd, the Brookfield zoo and the Lincoln Park Zoo. They were looking to start diagnostic lab locally using molecular techniques and they had some money from the U.S. Navy. I know this is like a long story because it was a long journey to get where I am, so bear with me.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:07:27] No, it's okay. Do you mind if we back up just for a couple seconds? Because it's going to get better. And I just want to clarify a few things, if that's okay.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:07:34] Yeah, go for it.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:07:35] Okay. So, I mean, this is great because I didn't actually know. Maybe we talked about this when we were drinking at some point, but honestly, I didn't know that you did all these necropsies, which is incredible. And yeah, I mean, we can talk about that also just for the whole podcast probably. But I'm curious, when you were at Epcot, at Disney, you were raising these fish, the tilapia and the perch and the alligators. I mean, those aren't fish, clearly, but you were raising those and they would serve them to eat in the cafes?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:08:06] So they had a cafe, I can't remember the name of it, next door. And they would use some of those fish to supplement what they would get in from like food purveyors. It wasn't the total source of all their seafood, but if we were harvesting some tilapia from the tanks that we were showing on exhibit, so basically exhibiting how you would do aquaculture in different ways. We had like a small raceway system, a small research system, and then these like tubes where the eels would be that was recirculating, so you could see it, but then they would, you know, the fish we were raising thought to be like market size, we would harvest them for the restaurant, then, you know, bring in a group of cohorts.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:08:51] I wonder, is that unique to a wonderland like Disney? Because I don't think I've ever heard of it. I mean, I guess there is such a practice, right, where you can go into a restaurant and you can pick out the fish from a tank that you want to eat. And I guess it's kind of the same thing, right?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:09:05] Yeah. I mean, I think of one of our suppliers Rushing Waters up in Palmyra, Wisconsin. They had a restaurant prior to COVID, and you could go out and catch fish and they would process their food there and then it would be on your table.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:09:21] Yeah. I mean, I guess. Yeah, that practice totally makes sense. I think for me, I'm stumbling over the fact that this was in Disneyland or I guess, well, I've never been to the Epcot Center, which I guess is more kind of science, right? Science oriented. So maybe.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:09:33] Yeah.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:09:34] My problem.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:09:35] Yeah. It tends to be like more of a future world thing. So it was in the same pavilion with the aquaponics systems where they would raise plants. So it just showing and exhibiting like how you did that without water or without being in soil. They were in like a perlite.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:09:53] That's like a soil. So you're having a double life, right? You're working as a hostess at a seafood restaurant and then you're also working at the Shedd Aquarium. But then also at this other place, which I can't remember the name you said, that does all the necropsies on all of the animals that die, either at the zoos or the parks or the aquariums. So how did you end up becoming part of the marketing team at Fortune Fish and Gourmet? That's the link I'm missing here.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:10:22] So. Well, one more link. So I started this molecular diagnostic lab for the university, and they knew me because they stole me away from the aquarium. They stole me away from the aquarium. I started this lab. I was working in the basement of a hospital. I did it for six years. I helped develop a lot of diagnostic tests for SeaWorld, the U.S. Navy. I got to spend a month in Africa doing some cheetah research for them. So it sent me kind of a lot of different places and got to work in a lot of different realms. But it wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to get back in fish. So I called a friend of mine, Mark Palicki, who is now the president of Fortune Fish, but at the time was the vice president of marketing. And I said, Hey, you remember me? We worked together at Shaw's Crab House. You were a GM there and I really want to work back in aquaculture. Do you have someone that you guys are working with as a buyer that would want someone with my background and my experience? And he and I have a little bit of a conversation and he's

like, Why don't you come in and work for me? You know, you have all this background in fish and conservation and can do this sustainability piece and educate our staff and work with our buyers. And then you also have, I had a business certificate with marketing and it would help. I would say anybody can do, but it's really helped me get this position. And I started out low rung, entry level and worked my way through and learned a ton. You learn how to do backends in websites and now social media stuff, but mostly point of sale and educational materials for staff and for our customers was a big part of the job and still is.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:12:14] So that was going to be one of my questions because in the course of developing these podcasts, I do a lot of research on the people. You know, whatever's online, I try to find whatever is online about the guest that I have on. And I was looking at Fortune Fish and Gourmet's website and I see that you offer services called the Fortune Fish School to all of your customers and culinary schools and other educational organizations associated with the hospitality industry. And so I imagine that your kind of science background and probably, I mean, you've had opportunities to show people things and teach people things. So kind of this science background slash educational background has enhanced this fish school for your customers and anyone else that is kind of taking these through your work. So tell me about these classes and do you do them or did you develop the curriculum and what's the need for them, actually, because I think and you can correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me that this is a unique offering. Although I don't know if others offer these kind of things, but it sounds like an amazing offering to just make sure that people understand kind of what they're buying and how to talk about it. Correct?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:13:21] Yeah. So this program was started by Mark Palicki, my predecessor. It's basically a customized program for our customers or culinary students or we'll even do groups like the American Culinary Federation. Or if there's some country clubs that want a group together, like they have a club managers or chef's association, we'll do it for them too. But really it's very custom to whatever they want it to be like. You know, a lot of folks will say, you know, like a retail store will say, hey, I want you to talk to my staff about some of the fish that we're bringing in right now, whether it's seasonal or it's farm raised fish. Talk about sustainability in the seafood industry. Explain the benefits and the cons of aquaculture and farming seafood. I never saw this as the role of a distributor when I started, but it really has helped us not only with our sales and our relationships with our customers, but also just like in purchasing in general. You know, a lot of people know how to purchase meat and like beef and chicken and pork, but there's so many different species of seafood and there's so many different specialized ways of ordering it, you know, do I order just a fillet? Do I order a portion? Are there pin bones in there that need to be pulled out? You know, what's my yield on that product? You know, we help walk them through that one fillet from one purveyor and another fillet from another purveyor aren't apples to apples all the time. You know, there could be different cuts or different ways. So this is really good for anybody. We have quite a few of our customers take us up on it. I did a lot of virtual ones during the pandemic. Yeah. I mean, because like mostly for our retail customers, our foodservice customers were just trying to scramble to stay open. But yeah, I mean and they're coming back online more and more and we offer not just about seafood anymore, but cheese and charcuterie education, but we still keep it under the Fortune Fish school umbrella.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:15:25] Right. That's super cool. And is that a unique offering, do you think, among kind of your category of business?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:15:31] I think so, yeah. I don't know too many others that offer that.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:15:34] I had never heard of it. And so that's why I'm asking about it, because I think it's so cool. Clearly you're in the marketing game and so I've had several marketers and communicators on the show thus far, and of course we're adding you to this list because, you know, you are the director of marketing for Fortune Fish and Gourmet. So what have you found to be one of the biggest challenges in marketing seafood to consumers? And how do you address this challenge? And I'm asking because you did mention, you know, people ask about aquaculture, like, should we buy it? Should we not buy it? So farmed fish, what's the deal? So what's the biggest challenge you've found and how do you kind of address that challenge?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:16:10] So we primarily market, which is interesting, to business to business, so to like those purchasing teams or the retailers or food service purveyors that are buying from us. But it all gets lumped under general consumer also, because they're also listening to these pieces and seeing the social media and have similar questions. But I think the biggest challenge is just getting over the hump of misconceptions on seafood. Like I was at a dinner on Friday night and someone still brought up tilapia and is it farmed with, you know, and they're trying to tiptoe around it, like fecal matter? And I was like, oh, is your fruits and vegetables when you organic farm fertilized with manure? Why should it matter? And it doesn't, I mean, and it's not, like, you know, yes, there's probably some runoff of fecal matter or whatever into a pond here and there. But for the most part, we're getting these wonderful healthy fish from other countries that go through our rigorous import system and inspections and are great for us and people still doubt that. And it's really hard to get over some of these major misconceptions. And all someone has to do is hear one bad thing and then it's, I'm not going to eat it. And it's really much harder to turn around and get them to see the positive side again. I mean, for instance, you know, take a pass on Chilean sea bass when Chilean sea bass was not sustainable. And now those fishermen and fisher women went through and they ratified their fishery and got it MSC certified and, you know, really worked hard and probably took a hit financially for quite a while just to build back that fishery up. And still, people balk at the fact that you have Chilean sea bass on your menu or in your warehouse, but it's completely sustainable. So I think those misconceptions are really the hardest thing to overcome. And I hope someday.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:18:24] Yeah, I think you're totally right. And I think the take a pass on Chilean sea bass. That was the actual campaign, right? And you know, you don't have to. Yeah, I remember that. And we don't have to kind of reinforce any misconceptions here by repeating them. But I think you're right. But the good thing, Stacy, I want to kind of emphasize is that there's a whole sustainable seafood movement behind addressing these myths and misconceptions. And I think that's one thing that's really great. And I think it's awesome also that you acknowledge that the, you know, Chilean sea bass industry, men and women, worked really hard to, you know, get their fishery in order and to build back the stocks, etc.. And so they should absolutely be acknowledged and rewarded for those efforts. And so, you know, it's a challenge, of course. And I think, again, the kind of line that we like to share is that there's good farming practices and there's bad farming practices and we can look at pork, right? I mean, you mentioned manure like pork farms or pig farms, rather, have probably some of the worst issues with that. They were, you know, industrial type farms. So, I mean, we can talk about good farms and bad farms all day, but I think the fact that there is a whole movement behind supporting fishers and fish farmers that do the good job and do the good work, I think is really important to acknowledge.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:19:36] Yeah. And disclaimer, we sell pork and chicken and beef and everything else, so not knocking it. And like you said, there are good producers and not so good producers in every aspect of.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:19:50] I mean, I'm not a vegetarian, so I eat everything. Pretty much.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:19:55] Me too.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:19:57] But I do pay attention to what I'm eating, of course. And again, just to discount, it's not fair to just discount something flat out just because you heard something or because it's trendy. I think it's really important for people to do their due diligence about what they put in their body. And remember also importantly that there are people behind these products. And so, you know, the more we can support the ones that do things right and the small scale, you know, that kind of producer I think is amazing. So I am all about that. So one thing that I want to ask you because I've never been clear on this at all in all my life of working in this industry and the sustainable seafood movement and you mentioned the seafood buyers, right? So there's the buyers that they shouldn't be looking for apples to apples because everybody has maybe a different product, a different kind of product type, format or whatever the deal is with the product. But what is the relationship between seafood buyers and the marketing teams? And also, you know, as the sustainability coordinator for Fortune Fish, like what does the sustainability coordinator do exactly and how does this work internally in terms of buying seafood? So do you advise your buyers on sustainability of fish, their buying or sourcing, or do they come to you and ask you about this, that or the other? Or do you set some sort of best practices or I guess just the whole thing. How do you as a director of sustainability and marketing like how do you interact with the guys that are actually making the decisions about sourcing seafood specifically?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:21:22] Okay. I want to say that I love our purchasing team. I work very closely with them and I talk to a lot of them almost on a daily basis.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:21:33] I'm sure.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:21:33] Probably more than they want, but sometimes it's just pestering or catching up. But yeah, I mean, a lot of our seafood buyers are very well educated on what they're purchasing. They've been purchasing for a long time, usually the same categories and by categories I mean like, you know, we have someone who does all farm raised salmon and we have another guy who just does halibut when it comes in. I mean, amongst their whole portfolio of purchasing. Someone who does rainbow trout. Another person who focuses on shellfish. So they have their various roles and responsibilities that don't really change that much. So they get to know the product line. They get to know their purveyors very well. They know what questions to ask them, and if they don't, they ask me. Or if a new product is coming in and an email was sent about it and I have a question about it, I don't hesitate to ask, but we have this really open communication between each other on what is being purchased and what areas you can improve on. I sit on a lot of roundtables for the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Supplier Roundtables, I should say, and I'll go back to my purchaser for just that item, like, let's say octopus and say, Hey, these are the things we talked about meeting, like what areas can we improve on, but also like for our suppliers that we can start engaging in and having on these roundtables also. So I guess to say it's just kind of a varying level of communication and engagement between each other and the products that we purchase.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:23:12] Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I mean, that's kind of how I thought it worked, but I wasn't sure like and maybe this depends on the company, but that

level of authority you might have over their purchasing decisions. So you mentioned Supplier Roundtable. And just to be clear, that's kind of a pre competitive collaboration around companies that buy for instance, you mentioned squid so companies and tell me if I'm wrong actually in this definition but.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:23:38] Now you're right. But I said octopus, but I don't know

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:23:42] Oh, octopus. No, it's okay. Whatever the fish or seafood is, companies will pre competitively get together, sit down at this proverbial round table and talk about everything right around the species, so the health of it, who's doing well, who's not doing well, what's going on, how can we support? Right. Maybe they'll throw in some money to support a particular fishery improvement project or initiative, correct?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:24:06] Yes. And then it's also very educational as we learn about fisheries improvement projects that are going on currently, get updates on those. It's multifaceted.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:24:16] And did you work with Mark? Maybe not necessarily Mark, but just your team to set the kind of requirements that you put forth to source sustainable seafood?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:24:26] No. I think it kind of just works out more fluidly with our team. Yeah, we have commitments, but I also have to make the understanding that when our buyer gets an offer of tuna from this area, that might not be as sustainable as another area, but hits the quality mark that our customers depend on. And also it's up, it's available and a good price. They have a lot of other things to juggle when they're purchasing. And, you know, I have to make sure that I take that into consideration. And I don't want to say I'm more lenient, but I'm not ready to put the hammer down and say, you have to do this because I know that it's not sustainable for our business.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:25:09] Yeah, I know. It's a very delicate balancing act between quality, availability, sustainability. I realize that those are all things that they have to take into consideration. So I'm not in any way trying to, like, judge you at all or Fortune. I'm just trying to understand because a lot of people don't realize that these are things that, you know, you have to take into account every time you're making just one teeny, tiny decision. It's very complicated.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:25:33] And there's the economic and social sustainability of the piece, too. I mean, like you said, there's humans behind all this product. There's families. There's mom and dad trying to put their kids through college. So, you know, it's not something you can just walk away from that fishery. Our mantra is always to help it, to lift it up and to make it more sustainable and work with it on improvements.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:25:57] Yeah, I like that approach and I agree with that actually personally and professionally that I would rather engage with a fishery that needs improvement than walk away. So it's kind of this fix versus avoid eternal question, right. Do you fix it or do you avoid it? I prefer to work and fix, which I think is great. And that sounds like what you guys do too. So speaking of pre competitive collaborations, you are part of one or Fortune Fish is part of one and you are also on the board, as I mentioned, the advisory board for Sea Pact. And so tell me a little bit about Sea Pact. And as you know, you were the former chair and you're the current member of the advisory council. So tell me a little bit about Sea Pact and what they do. And I would also like to caveat or just full

disclosure that Sea Pact as a funding collective has funded SAGE recently. And so thank you again, Stacy, for your support in funding SAGE. I couldn't do it actually without the support of everyone who has been so generous with their time and energy and financing. So tell me a little bit about Sea Pact and let's go from there.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:27:00] Well, first, let me say you're welcome for the funding and you earned it. You worked very hard for it takes a lot to convince a whole group of us to support one initiative collectively. But Fortune is a founding member of Sea Pact. It's an organization. It's a pre competitive collaboration between members of the middle of the supply chain. So it's a bunch of distributors from North America that got together, and we were all kind of doing a little bit here and there to help the industry make it be better. Fund fisheries improvement projects. Donate to this or to that. But we kind of felt individually we weren't making that big of a difference or moving the needle. So we thought collectively, you know, if we pool our money together, we could make bigger things happen. And goodness, I can't tell you how many years we've been together. It's got to be like eight. I have to get back to you on that yet. But yeah, it's a great group of folks, kind of like a second family to me. I've been a part of the advisory board since the inception. We not only help each other out in industry by sharing best practices, but also, you know, we get together and we fund, you know, fisheries or aquaculture improvement projects or projects that are relevant to seafood. We have our criteria that we look at. We work with these wonderful NGO partners that help us kind of stay on track and then we, you know, fund projects, but we also advocate for things in the seafood industry. You'll see us sign on to letters collectively and individually and support, like I said, projects that aren't necessarily like what you would think of as directly involved in aquaculture or fisheries, but indirectly such as yourself and your project.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:28:59] Yeah, I think that's a great recap of what Sea Pact is. And I really again, I think we've talked about these pre competitive collaborations and I think to me that's one of, like you said, you're stronger together. And I think that absolutely shows by pooling your resources and you know, you can advocate for things more effectively and your impact is a lot more, I guess, impactful. And I should mention that Sam Grimley, who's the new executive director of Sea Pact will be joining me on The Conch this season, which is, by the way, season two now, but I'm not sure exactly when, so I'll make sure and make a reference to your episode as well, Stacy, when I do interview Sam, so I'm excited to have him on and learn a little bit more about the programs that they support or that Sea Pact supports and also kind of the future hope for Sea Pact and where you guys are going. I also wanted to say, you know, it was kind of actually really touching. In the latest Sea Pact newsletter, you were quoted as saying, quote, "Recently, Seafood and Gender Equality, SAGE, turned one year old. And already I have learned so much about how gender plays a significant role in our industry." And, you know, that was announcing the funding of SAGE, again, as we mentioned. And so what were you referring to? Maybe you could help me understand what's something that you learned that maybe surprised you or shocked you? Because I don't get actually a lot of feedback. So I'm always open for feedback. And I'd love to know if there's something particular that you learned when hearing more about SAGE and in our discussions.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:30:27] Yeah, I think, you know, and this was in your early conversations when you were just starting out and you're explaining all this to me. You know, I was having a harder time separating it from, like, domestic U.S. industry is basically women in seafood are, you know, and the thing that struck a chord with me is when you were talking about and I can't remember the region off the top of my head, but you were talking about how the women who were fishing in this country were not recognized as fishermen and



their catch was not counted. And so then therefore wasn't part of the quota and wasn't legally catch, you know, so it's unreported, unregulated fishing and it was just because they were women.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:31:13] Yeah.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:31:13] And that right there was like, whoa, that affects, you know, the entire sustainability. And think of all of these fish that aren't being counted because these women were, you know, their occupation wasn't counted.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:31:28] Right.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:31:28] So that was like the number one thing that I learned and struck a chord with me when you first started out with SAGE.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:31:36] Yeah, all of it is so interesting because you're right. SAGE ultimately is dedicated to serving all women in every place in the supply chain. So starting from the fishing, you know, even pre fishing to ultimately maybe even the retailer, consumer level, honestly. But I have to focus somewhere, right? So the focus is definitely serving women in the industry such as yourself, right? Because I think that that's going to have positive repercussions for everyone all the way down in the chain. Right. And so what you were describing is something that this is actually a really great example of how women are marginalized in fishing communities. And what I was talking about, there was a project in Indonesia to support women fishers who because of the Indonesian laws, I think it was a municipal law, so kind of a regional law where everyone there has to register their occupation in this region in Indonesia. And these women can't register as fishers because women don't fish, right? So they can't registered as fishers. So by default they register as housewives, but they are fishing actually. And so their catch, which they are catching and selling, like you said, is not recognized. So it's not encapsulated or captured in any official catch quotas or catch data. And so it's actually considered illegal IUU fishing. Right. And so how can we make sure, you know, in this project, I think it was a USAID project, so they were helping these women become registered as fishers so that ultimately they would be able to avail themselves of benefits also as being registered fishers, because we know during COVID a lot of people couldn't work. Right. And so not only could these women not work, but they couldn't avail themselves of benefits that were provided to fishermen through associations or whatever. So it's a large web, right, of if one thing's not recognized, then it has repercussions for everything else, especially just their quotas. Right. It's really super interesting. So that's really great that you said that. Thanks for reminding me about that example.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:33:43] You know, speaking of women in fisheries and in the seafood industry, as I've mentioned before a kajillion times on this podcast, SAGE is about building gender equality and empowering women in the seafood industry. And so as a woman in the seafood industry, I would really love to hear if you could share one or two aspects of the industry itself, the seafood industry and its culture that may contribute to inequality in the sector. And I've talked about the inequalities before. We've all talked about them. So I think hopefully the listeners are pretty familiar, but they're pretty standard across all industries. So what are some of the things the industry can do to lessen these inequalities in your opinion or experience?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:34:22] Gosh, this was a hard question because it is an industry so complex and multifaceted, I think it's just that it may start with more of the hiring and with

recruiting a variety of people. You know, a lot of the times they kind of hire folks that are related to those of us that were friends or there's a lot of family, a lot of heritage in the seafood industry, which is not a bad thing at all but it makes the lineage and everybody look the same and think the same too, because that's, you know, you've been raised on the values of your parents and aunts and uncles or whatever. So I think it's just getting out there and getting into these pockets of industry that may not have the same point of view as that we had I keep saying this too, we're growing out as an industry. It's like, who's going to take over? Who is this next generation? It's very similar to land based farmers. You know, you don't see a lot of their children or young people getting into the industry. So who's going to kind of take over? And I think we have to look to other industries in hiring more outside, more different point of views in order to get a more diverse seafood industry. That makes sense?

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:35:43] Yeah, no, that totally makes sense. And you're right. I mean, I had on the podcast Julie Qiu from In a Half Shell blog and In a Half Shell website, and she mentioned the same exact thing that she came into the industry with virtually no knowledge of the industry. Right. So that means she has no baggage, kind of you know, people can say to her, well, this is how we've always done it, but she doesn't know how they've always done it. So she absolutely recommends and so does actually, it's like a best practice of kind of looking outside, bringing in new voices that might not even have experience in the industry, but can bring a huge wealth of experience to something that we desperately need. I totally agree. And then also what you mentioned around the families and kind of the nepotism, that is a huge deal. And I think I don't know the exact statistics because I don't know if they even exist, but the majority of seafood businesses are family owned or started by families. Right. And so, of course, they're hiring within their families. And again, that leads to people with the same values, the same, you know, last names, the same culture, the same religion, the same ethnic heritage. I mean, they're all the same pretty much. And so, yeah, that might be great for the family, you know, in the short term. But I think in terms of long term and longevity of their company and their business, I think absolutely everybody should be thinking about how to diversify and how to be more inclusive and set up systems that make them so. And you're right, again, one more thing, age. A lot of these guys are aging out and they're, like I've said before, they're creating kind of succession plans that they're passing down their institutional knowledge to people. And so who are they passing this knowledge down to? Right. Is that someone that looks just like them or is it someone who's different? So that's really definitely something that SAGE is involved in and wants to be a part of, kind of making sure that we're creating a system where people of all types can thrive. Right. And that means that the industry will thrive and survive, I think.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:37:42] Yeah. And I just point out that it's not always like succession with the head of the company. Sean owns our company. He's fantastic. He's helped me in my career a lot and giving me advice and introducing me to people all over the industry. And he has no children in the company, right? Yeah. But, you know, we do have like, you know, other folks who are hired on who bring in their family members. And really, I think it's a lot of not only low hanging fruit for hiring because we know that person, but also they understand that industry. They understand the hard work that it takes and they understand the cool side, the exciting side and how much you can learn. And I think that, you know, we have an easier time committing that to our friends and family and those that we're close to, but not necessarily those outside the industry and recruiting from those other organizations and getting more diversity in the workforce and the hands you get. People that everybody knows and friends and family that join the team. Not a bad thing, but it's like we that, you know, you're getting similar opinions.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:38:50] Right. Right. I understand. I totally understand the thinking behind that. It's just that's the thing that we have to actually actively work to minimize, honestly, if we want to continue to grow the industry in a way that I personally think we should be growing, so. Okay. So I have another question around this industry and the seafood sector. You know, and you as a woman who is thriving in the industry, what advice would you give to women who are currently either in the business, maybe struggling or thinking about joining kind of this exciting sector?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:39:25] That's I think like any sector, any business, I'd give the same advice and it's advocate for yourself. You know, no one else is going to do that. I mean, you maybe get lucky and have some peers or a boss that does for you. But the best advocate is by yourself and, you know, get your hands in and get involved in as much as you can, you know, I've been in the back of a house packing boxes over Christmas, you know, I like to learn the different aspects of the industry and know how the whole system works. And don't be afraid to get your hands dirty.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:40:01] Yeah. And be curious. It sounds like. Be curious. Get in there. Get your hands dirty. That's awesome.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:40:07] Be a joiner and, you know, stay late in Barcelona and hang out for an extra day with Julie and get to know her a little bit better and other folks in the industry.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:40:17] Well, that's just always good advice. That's just the best advice I ever got was to tack a few days on to a business trip and stay and actually really, you know, either hang out with someone like Stacy, you know, from the conference or the business trip meeting that you had or just explore the city because you're already there. And so take advantage of that time and that opportunity. And I wish someone had told me that earlier, honestly.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:40:40] Yeah. I mean, the people that you have conferences or frankly now it's webinars and working groups are those folks that, you know, you can tap into for anything going forward. That's super valuable to your career, to theirs, and to the industry as a whole.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:40:58] Yeah. Well said. Yes. So SAGE is about uplifting and amplifying diverse voices in the seafood industry, as you know. And this podcast is one of those kind of main ways that we do this. So this, Stacy, is your opportunity to uplift someone. So I would love to hear who would you like to uplift and why?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:41:16] Hey, so this is totally random. I tried to think of, you know, someone who would be really surprised by this and I think that she will be because we don't really know each other very well. But we've been working on a project with a larger group for a while now, so I chose Chloe Cho. She works for The Lexicon. She's a writer, and she's been kind of our leader on all of our project meetings for A Greener Blue, which is a group that's been putting together a dashboard, for purchasers and for customers and I can't tell much more about it.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:41:54] That's ok. We'll keep our eyes peeled for that for sure.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:41:55] I'm pretty sure I signed some document, but anyway, Chloe's been fantastic. She kind of organizes us. She sends out all the notes. She sends out on the agendas, like, makes sure we're all at the meeting on time. Like, really? Which is a hard thing to do when you're dealing with a lot of different folks from all aspects of the industry and getting us all on the same page now. I think she's been doing a fantastic job and I want her to get recognized.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:42:25] Well, that's awesome and thank you so much for sharing that. So is this dashboard something that's internal to Fortune Fish or are you working in partnership with others?

**Stacy Schultz** [00:42:33] In partnership with others in all aspects of the industry.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:42:42] That's amazing. I haven't heard of that. So once you are out from under your non-disclosure agreement, I'll hit you up for more information or I'll just keep my eyes peeled for that release because that sounds like something that we could totally use as an industry.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:43:07] And so did you want to let us know how we can find you on the Internet? And by you, I mean Fortune Fish.

**Stacy Schultz** [00:43:14] Oh, yeah, yeah. We have a website. It's [www.fortunefishco.net](http://www.fortunefishco.net). Not dot.com. Dot.net. We're also on Instagram, on Twitter, on Facebook and super easy to find.

**Julie Kuchepatov** [00:43:32] Well, I'll put those in the show notes so we can absolutely find you easily and understand a little bit more about what it means to distribute seafood, other meats, other cheeses, etc., fancy food products. So, Stacy, I want to thank you so much for joining me today on The Conch. I can't tell you how much this means to me. And, you know, I really value your leadership in this space. You know, you've done a lot to move the sustainable seafood movement forward and I am thrilled to be able to uplift your voice and give you this platform to talk more about yourself and about your efforts. And I just thoroughly appreciate our conversation, so I wish you all the best. And I know we'll be in touch soon. Thank you for tuning into the Conch Podcast. It would be amazing if you could take just two seconds to leave a review and share this podcast with your ocean loving friends. Thank you.

**Speaker 3** [00:44:34] 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.