

Malibu Seafood and Maritime Culture in Malibu, California

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Introduction

Los Angeles has been a revered food hub for generations. Unlike most major cities in the U.S. which expanded outwards from a single epicenter (ie. downtown), Los Angeles developed outwards from a series of peripheries. Far more than Downtown, these distinct neighborhoods contributed significantly to the physical pattern of development in Los Angeles (Gabbert 2015). Malibu, California is one of the most physically secluded fragments of the greater Los Angeles area, a city notorious for standardizing discontinuity and dis-integration (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2000, 1686). Each separate neighborhood, together creating Los Angeles, is characterized by a unique but dynamic identity. Among these observable identities is food.

This paper focuses on seafood foodways, domestically as well as globally, through the lens of Malibu Seafood Market and Patio Cafe (Malibu Seafood), a popular seafood restaurant and market which has been apart of Malibu since the early 1970's. I will present the cultural history of Malibu Seafood Market and Patio Cafe to produce an understanding of the social, cultural, and economic factors affecting seafood foodways. What makes Malibu Seafood continue to be successful regardless of changes in it's cultural and environmental surroundings? What is the current global model of seafood production and consumption? Will this model be as resilient to global change as Malibu Seafood Market and Patio Cafe has been to local change?

While food habits and rituals have been studied by anthropologists, sociologists, and conservationists for years, there is very little in depth, ethnographic research on seafood foodways, particularly Malibu Seafood Market and Patio Cafe. By addressing how external factors — history, physiography, coastal proximity, climate change, competition, menu development etc — affect the success or failures of seafood restaurants, one can uncover how

culture and customs that influence the connections between the aforementioned factors. Seafood production and consumption are essential to understanding the sustainability of the current global seafood model as well as predicting the future of seafood foodways. Food functions to create solidarity and to mark cultural groups. In other words, food is one of the major foundations of any culture; however, food practices can be individual creations. To strip a community of its food is to strip it of its identity.

The dynamics of Malibu Seafood Market and Patio Cafe are in many ways reflective of the greater seafood industry. Therefore, through Malibu Seafood Market and Patio Cafe, we can uncover what current factors contribute to seafood supply and demand, and in response policies can be rendered more effective. Predictions surrounding the future of the seafood industry will enhance the sustainability of our current seafood model. Ultimately, implementing more enterprising policies will help with the continuation of our ocean's species, confer the longevity of the seafood industry and selfishly, satiate the masses for longer with more delicious and nutritious food items.

While this paper deals with an array of topics which vary in scales of size and complexity, each topic is related to the others. Most importantly, each topic addressed in this paper that follows is heavily dependent on the ocean environment and ecology. I will include a brief history of California including indigenous cultures and practices, the geomorphology of manmade development in Los Angeles, Malibu as an affluent and particularly marine oriented enclave, Malibu Seafood as a tangible cultural identity, the fishing industry, and sustainability/conservation.

Early History of California and Malibu

Thousands of years ago, before Los Angeles became an urban metropolis, the Gabrielino-Tongva (Tongva) people inhabited the region. Approximately 5,000 people lived among 100 interconnected villages in the Los Angeles Basin (Greene 2019). While some villages were coastal and others were inland, both types of settlements depended on water heavily. Villages were established on the banks of rivers, streams and beaches along the Pacific Ocean. Water provided the Tongva with food resources and served as an avenue of transportation. Neither the inland nor the coastal groups remained stationary or isolated from each other or their surrounding landscapes. Coastal Tongva made frequent trips to the interior and inland Tongva visited the coast. On these trips, coastal Tongva hunted terrestrial animals and traded shells, dried fish, and otter skins, while interior groups traded acorns, obsidian and deerskin (Gabrielino 2004).

Through technological innovation, coastal Tongva villages were able to effectively and reliably maximize their use of marine resources. They constructed rafts made of tule reeds, nets made of seaweed cord, and hooks from shell, bone, or wood (Gabrielino 2004). Through these rafts, nets, and hooks, the Tongva caught big fish like tuna, swordfish, and sharks as well as marine mammals such as sea lions, sea otters, and elephant seals. Along the shore, Tongva people gathered their most important meat source: shellfish (Bean & Smith 1978, 539). By the time Spanish explorers set foot in California, the Tongva were likely the richest naturally resourced indigenous group in the region (Kroeber 1925, 621). In 1769, the Spanish docked in Southern California and disrupted the Tongva's complex civilization. The Spanish introduced livestock and nonnative plants which disrupted the native ecology and in turn interfered with the

Tongva's foraging practices. This cultural disruption and Spanish colonization project affected other indigenous cultural groups.

A few hundred miles up the California coast, the Ohlone indigenous group experienced the Spanish cultural imposition similarly. Ohlone had strong ties to the ocean, providing them with sustenance, economy, and rich material resources. The Ohlone people, also known as Costanoan, lived as north as San Francisco and as south as Monterey, both cities have coast and inland territory. The ocean was a fundamental part of the Ohlone economy. The ocean provided a trade relationship with other groups, made traveling more efficient and produced an abundance of seafood. Ohlone collected shellfish on the shore, used dip and seine nets to fish in rivers and made bonfires at night to attract fish which were promptly speared. Tule reed rafts facilitated fishing and trade among indigenous groups. Particularly, the Ohlone exchanged abalone shells, dried abalone meat, mussels, and salt with the Yokuts who resided in the San Joaquin Valley, inland from the coast. In exchange they received acorns and piñon nuts. Ohlone, who spent most of their lives interacting with the water, were so inextricably connected to the Pacific Ocean, they believed that upon death, "their souls were said to journey across the sea" (Pritzker 2000, 2). Disease and extermination reduced the Ohlone population (Pritzker 2000, 1). During the Spanish Era (1769-1821), an estimated 10,000 Ohlone were reduced by 80 percent (Pritzker 2000, 1). Those who avoided death by way of disease or violence were forced to relocate to Spanish missions. After the Mexican Revolution in 1821, the missions were secularized and many Ohlone migrated to Southern California where they found work on ranchos. Nevertheless, all these indigenous groups contributed to the history of California.

Around 15,000 years ago, if you were to walk along the coast of California from modern-day San Luis Obispo to modern-day Malibu, you would see hundreds of villages. While they would vary in size, the villages would probably be within a mile of the ocean and situated next to a freshwater source, like a stream or lake. Among these villages was Humaliwo, which means “where the surf sounds loudly,” was home to approximately 1,000 Ventureño Chumash Native Americans and sat at the base of now Malibu Canyon. By the time the Spanish encountered the Chumash, approximately 66% of them were concentrated on villages along the coast (Johnson 1999). Thus, it is no surprise that the apparent bond between humans and ocean seen in modern day Malibu, California has existed since Malibu was occupied by Humaliwo.

Chumash Indians did not rely on domesticated animals or plants, nor did they use metal or incorporate the wheel into their society. Nevertheless, they consistently maintained the densest Native American population in California (Reith 1964, 63). Their ability to adapt to nature made the, “Chumash one of the most complex hunter/gatherer societies in the world” (Arnold 1995, 733). At the heart of their success and complexity was the tomol, or canoe (Holguin 2017, 5).

Usually, “coastally situated hunter gatherers are not dependent upon marine resources to any significant extent” and instead, “[confine their exploitation] to ‘buffer’ resources like shellfish” (Clark & Yesner 1981, 446). This model could not be more erroneous than when it is applied to Chumash civilization. The tomol, along with abundant marine resources and temperate weather, allowed the Ventureño Chumash to access the largest body of water in the world, the Pacific Ocean and in turn made year-long fishing both possible and bountiful. The tomols, meaning ‘house of the sea’, were anywhere from 12 to 30 feet long and made from multiple redwood or pinewood planks. These planks were connected by cords and sealed with

Asphaltium, which at the time, was an abundant resource in the region. Dozens of people or hundreds of pounds of goods could fit in a single tomol. The tomol was an essential technological adaptation which made fishing the most important form of resource acquisition (Tegler & Edwards 2015, 2). Chumash used the tomol along with harpoons, hooks, lines, spears and nets to sustain their dense coastal populations. The Ventureño Chumash would supplement their ocean based diet with terrestrial game like coyote, rabbit and deer as well as with native plants. The amole, or soap plant, whose bulb could be roasted and eaten, used like modern soap, or turned into a brush was a terrestrial resource especially relied on by the Chumash.

The Chumash dependence on marine resources allowed them to be resilient against other forms of nature's unpredictability. For example, "there is no evidence for punctuated change in Chumash society during the Medieval Climatic Anomaly, a period of two multi-decadal droughts in western North America" (Johnson 2011, 480). Moreover, the Chumash who were geographically isolated from the ocean could overcome their immediate physical environment and geographic disaster by depending on coastal resources through trade.

Trade was an essential feature of Chumash society. While most of the year Ventureño Chumash lived in permanent villages, they set up temporary camps during extended hunting or trading trips. On trips inland, the Chumash of Humaliwo traded various seashore items like otter skins or shells with the Kitanemuk to their east: for salt, antelope or elk skins and obsidian (Tegler & Edwards 2015, 4). Additionally, the Ventureño Chumash used their tomols to trade with the Salinan to the north as well as other Chumash residing on the Channel Islands. The tomol allowed them to make contact with Chumash and other Native Americans, frequently. In addition to providing sustenance, the tomols facilitated exchange of crafts, tools and information

(Arnold 1995, 733). Considering the significance of the tomol to the Chumash, it is no surprise that tomol builders occupied a high rank in their society.

In comparison to indigenous communities who occupied foothills or desert landscapes, coastal Chumash were primarily sedentary. The Ventureño Chumash could rely on marine resources so effectively that sedentism was favored over seasonal and geographic migration. Permanent villages, which existed for centuries, were comprised of residential structures, sweat lodges, ceremonial structures, dance areas and cemeteries (Sampson 2011, 2). Inter-village ceremonies, feasts and even marriages were held to maintain or strengthen bonds among various Chumash who were otherwise geographically isolated from each other.

By traveling and trading so extensively, the Chumash developed a complex economic system and provided most of the currency (shells) used by indigenous peoples in central and southern California. As a result of the standardization of shell currency, villages developed craft specialization and trade became more intricate and productive. In the case of the Chumash, baskets were their specialized craft, used for storage, leaching tannic acid from acorns, cooking and as water bottles (Hudson and Blackburn 1983, 7).

The 4,000 year epoch of Chumash reign was nearing its end by the mid 1500's when Juan Cabrillo, a Spanish explorer, anchored in modern day Malibu and claimed land for the King of Spain. There is a gap in recorded history over the next 200 years giving the impression there was no contact between Europe and California. In 1794 tranquility was interrupted by King Charles III of Spain. He felt pressure to compete with English and Russian exploration and thus ordered the exploration of California. According to Spanish law at the time, any land discovered by their explorers belonged to the crown (Malibu Lagoon Museum 2020). Therefore land grants were

provisionally granted to Spanish colonists as a reward for their effort and loyalty to the Crown. After the success of the Mexican Revolution in 1821, the concessions were revoked and permanent land ownership was finally possible (Loomis 2012). Colonial authorities redistributed indigenous lands to the colonists they deemed worthy.

During this period, for 99 percent of human history, food was acquired through hunting and gathering (Yesner et. al 1980, 727). Yet to many anthropologists, agriculture is a defining characteristic of complexity in prehistoric indigenous communities. The Chumash were able to transcend this myopic qualification and distinguish themselves as uniquely complex and successful through technological innovation, social interconnectedness and most importantly, maritime culture. This type of food interrelationship was the cornerstone of Chumash civilization and the crux of society for many other coastally situated indigenous tribes. Today, the California Coast is inhabited by major cities who still rely on marine life for sustenance, leisure, and tourism.

Malibu, California: Recent History

Despite Los Angeles being, “one of the most isolated and geographically unlikely settings for a future metropolis,” towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, people from all over the U.S. relocated to Los Angeles giving rise, “the gradual realization of the United States as a bicoastal nation” (Spitzzeri 2001, 24). Newcomers tended to be white middle or upper class Americans who together significantly expanded the population and geographic range of Los Angeles. However, coastal areas did not experience the same pattern of development (Davidson 2007, 74). Malibu land changed hands a few times during the 19th century; until finally, in 1892, Frederick Rindge made an initial purchase of 13,300 acres at 10 dollars an acre. Later, 13,300

acres would grow to 17,000 acres (Loomis 2012). Frederick Rindge was a wealthy businessman from Cambridge, Massachusetts. He always dreamed of, "a farm near the ocean, under the lee of the mountains, with a trout brook, wild trees, good soil, and excellent climate" (Rindge 1898, 64). When Rindge moved to Los Angeles he was delighted to find exactly what he was looking for: a rustic idyll and a home away from the hustle and bustle of Los Angeles, a growing metropolis. Rindge's purchase of the Malibu Topanga Rancho Sequeit marked the beginning of an incessant struggle between developing or preserving Malibu's 21 miles of scenic beauty. Today, the conflict remains.

Following Rindge's purchase, Malibu was only accessible to millionaire Rindge and those lucky enough to be personally granted access. Two looming advancements threatened the Rindge family's idyllic getaway. For one, the population of Los Angeles was starting to explode meaning urban sprawl was underway. Second, and most significant, was the invention of the automobile which occurred alongside the development of Los Angeles. Unlike other major cities in the United States like New York or Chicago, the co-evolution of the automobile and the City of Los Angeles established Los Angeles as a, "radical deviation from the classic industrial-pre-automobile-city model" (Davidson & Entrikin 2005, 581). Los Angeles emerged as the automobile capital of the world. The Rindges tried everything to keep people off their land but Malibu had never been so physically accessible. In 1904, Rindge responded to the Interstate Commerce Commission's decision to build a coastal railroad that would run through the Rindge property by building his own railroad, with no destination and closed to the public. However Frederick passed away unexpectedly and his wife May took over the battle to keep Malibu private. May decorated her land with chained up fences and armed guards on horseback. For

three decades she desperately fought a slew of legal battles, including at the Supreme Court level, as well as resisted increasing public pressure to concede. Ultimately, money was not enough to keep Malibu hidden from the public. May passed away, broke and hated after spending millions of dollars in a failed attempt to protect her land.

The La Costa area of Malibu, a small section a few miles north of Santa Monica, was bought for the exorbitant sum of 6,000,000 dollars in 1928, signaling the end of an era characterized by privatization and exclusivity (Malibu Lagoon Museum 2020). One year later, Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) was opened to the public: it ran from Santa Monica to Oxnard in a line directly through Malibu. Preservation was no longer at the heart of Malibu; development was. In the decades that followed, Malibu became one of the most mismanaged instances of coastal development in the history.

By the second half of the 1960's, California was home to the largest number of people in the United States, most of whom were living in coastal communities (Davidson 2007, 70). Nevertheless, both population growth rates and population density were notably low in Malibu, especially in comparison with neighboring coastal communities (Malibu Coastal Vision 2008). Surrounded by the Santa Monica Mountains, Malibu is physically isolated from Los Angeles to the southeast and Ventura to the north. Innate isolation coupled with impossibly high real estate prices allowed for only the richest Angelino's¹ to afford a slice of rugged paradise. Developers realized this, and in an effort to maximize space and thus profit, they built coastal houses directly next to each other. The result was devastating. Coastal access points were ignored and turned into

¹ Angelino: A resident of Los Angeles

luxury developments: public beaches were indirectly made private. Again, the general public was not included in visions of the future, and Malibu prevailed as an private rural paradise.

People living in Los Angeles are, “often presented as enthusiastic modernists and urban fantasists” (Davidson 2007, 75). However in the case of Malibu, Angelino’s abandoned their modernist attitudes and, “drew limits around the growth machine, in order to protect and improve access to the beach” (Davidson 2007, 74). In 1972, 55% of Angelino’s voted for Proposition 20 hoping to protect the coast from relentless development (Fischer 1985, 313-314) in response to Malibu’s re-found exclusivity. Subsequently, the California Coastal Commission was created and the Coastal Act of 1976 was put into effect. Both intended to regulate coastal development. The effort of Angelino’s to save the coast from development was especially meaningful and impressive situated in its pro-development context.

On March 28th, 1991, Malibu was officially integrated in the County of Los Angeles (Gillis & Bath 2016). By 2018, the population of Malibu reached 12,846 individuals which irrevocably altered its culture from a reclusive and funky hideaway to a commercialized derivative of Los Angeles (U.S. Census Bureau 2018). **MORE DEMOGRAPHICS** Dick Van Dyke, an American actor and Malibu local for 27 years, explained, “there was a small-town feel to [Malibu] that’s just not there anymore” (Stevens 2013, 2). Until recently, Malibu was remarkably localized. Residents, whether affluent celebrities or steadfast beach bums, have unified to preserve the ‘small-town feel’ Dyke described when reminiscing on Old school Malibu. Rob Reiner, a prominent actor, director and Malibu homeowner, encouraged the city to implement one of the strictest anti-development programs in the United States (Nagourney 2014, 1). Meanwhile, similarly intentioned surfers adopted anti-outsider attitudes. Displays of localism

like ‘no kooks allowed’ or ‘go home’ have been apart of sidewalks or walls near surf points in Malibu since the 1950’s when surfing was popularized. In the end, Malibu had no choice but to capitulate to outsiders and tourism became an integral part of its economy (Malibu Coastal Vision 2008). Despite Malibu’s changes in landscape, policies, and general sentiment towards visitors, one identity has stayed the same: Malibu remains one of America’s great maritime epicenters.

Those who muster up the courage to leave Los Angeles for Malibu by enduring laborious traffic are rewarded in the form of salt and water. One way or another, every freeway in Los Angeles that runs east-west ends up at the same place: Pacific Coast Highway, which runs along the perimeter of the rugged coast, mirroring the orientation and features of the Pacific Ocean. Where the ocean recedes, PCH protrudes. When the tide is low, PCH stands tall and when the tide is high, PCH appears shallow. To be in Malibu is to be within one mile of the PCH, and thus the ocean. Even when it is blocked by coastal homes or the Santa Monica Mountains, the water is impossible to overlook. For example, most stores in Malibu carry ocean related merchandise, like surfboards or t-shirts with ocean related graphics, which are popular among locals as well as tourists. Moreover, most restaurants in Malibu offer seafood dishes and feature outdoor seating where salty air and seagulls remind patrons just how close the ocean really is. Also reminding visitors of water are the avid beach-goers who amble along PCH, and other public spaces, barefoot or shirtless, or perhaps with a wetsuit peeled off at the hips. However the most pronounced reminder of all is the 780 feet long Malibu Pier.

There is no greater symbol of Malibu’s maritime culture than the Malibu Pier. The Malibu Pier is located on the same stretch of beach as Humaliwo where the Ventureño Chumash

once lived. The Rindges built the pier in 1905 to compensate for Malibu's physical inaccessibility. The pier originally provided supplies to the Rindge estate (White & White 2002, 1). Over the following decades, El Niño storms damaged the pier and the Rindges cyclically reconstructed it in response. This pattern has been the case for the Malibu Pier from its infancy until now.

Beginning in the 1920's, the pier was featured in countless Hollywood films which contributed to its enchanted reputation. By the 1950's, it was a popular spot for glamorous socialites to get together and eat or drink (Pier Fishing in California 1997). However, fishing has always been at the heart of Malibu Pier. In the years surrounding the Great Depression, the pier made fishing accessible and provided laid-off fishermen and their families with sustenance (Pier Fishing in California 1997). In 1934 the pier was officially opened to the public and by 1935 sport fishing concessions were granted. The ocean end of the pier was extended and a bait and tackle shop opened up three years later, further encouraging and facilitating charter fishing (Pier Fishing in California 1997). Fishing distinguishes the Malibu Pier from neighboring piers, like the Santa Monica Pier which highlights a ferris wheel and a rollercoaster as the two main attractions. In more recent years, the Malibu Pier has become less known for fishing and more known for the farm-to-table style restaurant located on both its ends. In essence, Malibu Pier has become a retail business rather than a recreational public space, despite becoming a historical landmark in 1985 (White & White 2002, 2).

While the pier has changed ownership throughout the years, it has remained vulnerable to nature's forces. Big waves and cyclic El Niño's have on several occasions closed the pier for extended periods of time and forced periodic renovations. To the southeast of the pier, an

artificial reef was built out of dilapidated cars, concrete pilings and other abandoned materials in a proactive effort to protect the pier from storms and waves (White & White 2002, 2). Private individuals, private companies, the State of California, and the City of Malibu have respectively spent millions reconstructing the pier. However, much like the Rindge's experience in Malibu over a hundred years ago, those who manage the pier today are not credulous to its romanticization, and instead recognize that the pier, like most of Malibu, is jeopardized by the elements. As alluring as Malibu can be, it is under constant threat of El Nino's, landslides, floods, storm surges, pollution and most notoriously, wildfires. Today however, natural disasters in Malibu are generally forgotten until they are underway.

History and Ethnography of Malibu Seafood

It is easy to forget Old-school Malibu while driving up PCH and passing Nobu Malibu, where an army of valets both park luxurious cars and fend off shameless paparazzi so wealthy patrons can dine with the sounds of the ocean exceeding anything else. Old-school Malibu is also hard to remember driving past the Malibu Pier, where swarms of tourists and influencers look untoward standing on dilapidated pylons, yet far outnumber local fisherman. If you were to continue driving north, past Starbucks, Chipotle, and Whole Foods, the thought of Malibu before chain-restaurants or commercialized industry might be impossible to imagine. All this changes when you descend the first major incline in Malibu, where the sweeping view of the Pacific Ocean and California cliffs is punctuated with a quaint restaurant, Malibu Seafood Market & Patio Cafe (Malibu Seafood).

Malibu Seafood: Pier Location

Malibu Seafood was originally opened in 1972 by Wayne and Linda Caywood. It stood perched at the ocean end of the Malibu Pier, in the same building that was once a bait and tackle shop and is now a farm-to-table style restaurant. Three years after its initial opening, Mark Ridgeway joined the operation and has since been an owner. Today, in addition to Ridgeway, Jon Christiansen and their nephew, Ryan, work together to run Malibu Seafood. Christiansen fondly described the first edition of Malibu Seafood, the restaurant at the end of Malibu Pier, as being, “a little shack with a big pot with steamed crabs and lobsters.” Back then, the employees would leave the Malibu Pier early in the morning and dock again before noon, bringing fresh crabs with them. The restaurant advertised its own commitment to fresh and local seafood by displaying a photograph of an old fishing vessel at sea accompanied by the text: “The reason we don't open for breakfast is we're out catching lunch.” Today, the sign is displayed next to the pickup window at the current location of Malibu Seafood.

Malibu Seafood Corral Canyon Location

In 1977, five years after opening, Malibu Seafood moved four and a half miles north of the pier and resumed business in a former personal residence at the base of Corral Canyon. At the time of their reopening, Malibu Seafood's kitchen was composed of a steam pot and a fryer, then a grill and so on, until it came to have the expansive arrangement it does today: a refrigerated fish market, lobster tank, full in-house kitchen, pickup window, three tiered dining patio etc, not to mention up to fifteen employees split between the front and back during their busiest season, summer. Although Malibu Seafood has changed since relocating to Corral Canyon, it continues to embrace the casual and intimate qualities its modest beginnings provoked. Unlike most

restaurants in Malibu today, Malibu Seafood was started by commercial fishermen rather than restaurateurs. Nevertheless, it has remained a focal point of food and culture in Malibu, outlasting many of its neighboring establishments.

While reservations aren't an option and the queue outside of Malibu Seafood often spills into the parking lot, the line moves surprisingly fast. By the time you have contemplated the menu, which is featured on the inside and outside of the building, presumably for this very reason, its time to order. You will have stood in the parking lot, on the porch, next to the seafood market display, next to the live lobster tank and finally, at the ordering counter.

A Day at Malibu Seafood

The sequence faced while waiting in line may seem lengthy or discursive, but each element plays an integral role in preparing you for your meal ahead. In the parking lot you absorbed the view of the canyon, pondered the ocean a few yards away or even caught a glance of Malibu Beach RV Park (one RV is visible if you stand to the left of the restaurant). By the time the line has moved significantly, which is really no time at all, you find yourself passing the menu featured outdoors to take your first steps into Malibu Seafood. These first steps are outdoors of course and the only thing separating you from the people in the parking lot are a few stairs and a heavy chain rail, rusted and slightly sticky to the touch from the salty air. The porch floor creaks the slightest bit as it settles under your weight. Then the screen door flies open and just like that, you're inside. In front of you and to your right is the seafood market, where Mark Ridgeway is probably weighing out a salmon filet, wrapping it in paper, and slapping a "Malibu Seafood" sticker on it. You notice the fish in the display all vary in size, shape and color but it is your sense of smell that is most stimulated. In the parking lot you could faintly make out the

smell of the ocean, or maybe you didn't smell it at all, but rather saw it and tricked your own nose into the briney sensation. Residual smells of the ocean combine with fresh fish and lemon when you first walk inside Malibu Seafood. Your thoughts are interrupted by a hand plunging into the live lobster tank. The water in the lobster tank responds to the disruption just as water in the ocean would, dramatically: a ripple, then sloshing, then ripple again until the energy dissipates and the water appears tentatively still, pending the next lobster order of course.

When you arrive at the ordering counter, you're confronted with two choices: left register or right register, a rotation of employees manning each one while other members of the staff bounce between the kitchen and the pick up window, carrying red trays of heaping seafood, lemons sans seeds, and homemade tartar sauce. Before you know it, you're holding a buzzer and you're back outside scanning the property for a seat with the perfect view to accompany your meal. It doesn't take long to realize each seat has a superlative and almost panoramic view of the ocean.

To the right of restaurant is a side patio featuring red picnic tables shaded by red umbrellas. To the left is a three tiered patio. The first and lowest tier, which has been around since the structure of Malibu Seafood was a residential home, mimics the side patio's presentation of picnic tables shaded by red umbrellas. Since Malibu Seafood came to occupy the property, two more tiers have been added. The sun drenches the patio's second tier where red picnic tables stand free of umbrellas. The third tier is the highest level of the property and is shaded not by red umbrellas but by a blue roof. There, picnic tables are surrounded by the Pacific Ocean on one side and murals of the coast or marine life on the others.

Generally speaking, restaurants are not Malibu's main attraction. Visitors usually don't make the trip to Malibu as food tourists, especially in the way people visit Los Angeles to taste the diverse and authentic array of cuisines available there. Nevertheless, Malibu can compete and even outshine Los Angeles as a food hub in one category: seafood. Malibu Seafood's combination of fresh seafood, outdoor seating and unparalleled view has set it apart from other restaurants in Malibu as an eternal food tourism destination. The menu features grilled, steamed or fried fish and shellfish. Regardless of the way in which the seafood is prepared, the flavor and integrity of the seafood itself is valued above the accompaniment; the Malibu Seafood, "philosophy [is] great tasting fish doesn't have to be marinated, modernized, or meddled with" (Levitt 2012). Because of the high quality fish offered at Malibu Seafood, the menu maintains simple and charming recipes that predate the restaurant itself.

Before Malibu Seafood Market & Patio Cafe, there was the Sandcastle, a seafood restaurant on the beach of Paradise Cove, one of the most famous enclaves in Malibu. The Sandcastle was started by a relative of the current Malibu Seafood owners. The Sandcastle displayed Cape Cod inspired architecture and decoration featuring a gray shingled roof and red leather booths rather than standard chairs (Fuller 1981, 12). While Malibu Seafood isn't a direct descendant of the Sandcastle, many of the dishes featured on the current menu were featured at the Sandcastle over half a century ago.

The Malibu Seafood recipes offered today which are inspired by the Sandcastle's dishes from decades ago are an oddity because of the ephemeral quality of restaurants in Malibu (Shindler 1991, 2). Malibu Seafood overcame the Malibu Curse² by being a family owned and

² No matter how good a restaurant begins as in Malibu, it will inevitably turn sour (Shindler 1991)

run business, an anomaly due to major global seafood industries controlling the production, preparation, and consumption of most seafood as well as because independent enterprises in Malibu have become increasingly consolidated by big businesses and chains. However homogenization is not the only major threat to restaurants in Malibu.

Environmental Threats

Environmental disasters have threatened Malibu for as long as recorded history. In particular, wildfires have been the most severe form of environmental devastation to jeopardize Malibu Seafood and the greater Malibu area. Malibu's physical landscape is made up of a chaparral ecosystem which consists of thick vegetation despite persistent droughts. Dense, dry vegetation coupled with Malibu's notorious Santa Ana Winds³, have caused wildfires to be an environmental threat since the Chumash era. The Chumash set intentional fires annually to reduce the amount of biomass accumulation, which would otherwise become natural fuel. Today, this practice is commonly known as prescriptive burning⁴. When the Spanish took over, they forbid the Chumash's burning practice (Maldonado 2016, 55). In the last century, development has compounded the devastating effects of wildfires in the region.

While the chaparral ecosystem in Malibu causes wildfires naturally, development has exacerbated their magnitude and frequency. In an effort to protect houses in Malibu, small fires are suppressed immediately and prescriptive burning is nearly impossible to practice safely, despite being recognized as the leading strategy to reduce wildfire size and frequency

³ Santa Ana Winds are extremely strong and dry winds which originate inland and blow towards the ocean particularly pervasive in Southern California

⁴ Prescriptive burning is a modern rendition of Chumash and Tongva technology in which a controlled fire is set every 5-7 years to lessen biomass accumulation and thus reduce the risk of severe wildfires (Davis 1995, 32)

(Maldonado 2016, 55). Chaparral ecosystems are considered to have the most incendiary vegetation in the world; wildfires occur naturally every 15 to 30 years (Mauch 2015, 49). In the last century, “on average... a large fire (1000 acres plus) [occurred] every two-and-one-half years... The entire surface area of the western Santa Monica Mountains has been burnt three-times-over” (Davis 1995, 3). To complicate the matter, an inverse correlation has also been proposed where not only does development compound wildfire devastation but also, “[wildfires stimulate] development as well as upward social succession” (Davis 1995, 8). After Malibu was declared a federal disaster area in the 1950’s, residents experienced relaxed fire codes and land use regulations in addition to being offered low-interest loans and tax breaks, making Malibu as desirable as ever (Davis 1995, 8). Establishments like Malibu Seafood have found themselves embedded in the aforementioned cycle and have thus become at increasing risk of wildfires among other natural disasters.

After a wildfire, soil experiences two major changes; for one, the top layer of soil is unable to retain water and two, the soil becomes loose as a result of burnt plant roots no longer holding the soil in place. In conjunction, these two changes prompt flooding as well as erosion in the form of landslides and mudslides. Because Malibu Seafood, situated at the base of a steep hill, similar to most of Malibu, is in particular danger of these subsequent hazards, flooding, landslides and mudslides. Moreover, Malibu consists of multiple and seismically active fault lines: Malibu Coast Fault, the Las Flores Reverse Fault, the Anacapa Fault, and the Santa Monica Fault (Malibu Coastal Vision 2008). Meanwhile, rising sea levels, potential tsunamis, and powerful storms, namely El Nino, bombard the coast. Because no recurrent environmental

hazard exists completely independent of another, at times they are triggered, reinforced, or compounded by each other.

Maritime Threats:

The process of obtaining, preparing and serving seafood has always been complicated by environmental change. However in recent history, two conflicting processes are at odds with each other. Firstly, human-caused or accelerated climate change and environmental degradation are disturbing seafood foodways. Secondly, globalization, transportation and new technologies are expanding the capacity of seafood foodways. As each of these two developments change over time independently, they also adjust in response to each other and ultimately transform the seafood industry.

During the Lower Paleolithic Epoch over 100,000 years ago, pictographs were created depicting humans fishing (Toussaint-Samat 1987, 270). While historical cave paintings of fishing are much rarer than those of hunting, it is clear that fish has been a form of human sustenance for hundreds of thousands of years. The perishability of seafood has been one of the greatest obstacles in seafood production and distribution since it first appeared as a source of human nutrition.

The short shelf life of fresh seafood has challenged the seafood industry since its beginning. Before modern technology, seafood could last a couple day long journey inland in the winter, but in summer, the heat would spoil it almost immediately. Salting, curing, and smoking have become common practices to preserve seafood and have also been effective in killing harmful parasites or bacteria. Freezing, another successful technique used to preserve seafood and kill parasites and bacteria, was originally practiced by The Vikings. However it wasn't until

the late 1920's that industrial freezing first emerged, followed by super freezing, or flash freezing, a few decades ago (Greenberg 2014, 106). While salting, curing and smoking delayed perishability, super freezing extended seafood shelf life exponentially while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of a fish's delicate texture and flavor. With the defeat of seafood perishability through salting, curing, smoking and most importantly, freezing, locality was irrelevant. The seafood industry involuntarily evaded one of the most valued features of American agriculture in the mid 21st century: localness.

It was not until recently that fresh seafood became available regardless of location, season, or species. Now, people living in inland areas who would otherwise have no exposure to the ocean are able to access a variety of seafood options at any given time through more efficient transportation and major breakthroughs in freezing technologies. With the advent of freezing technologies and thus longer seafood shelf life, a change in who could access seafood, both as a consumer and as a distributor, transformed seafood foodways and the seafood industry into an entirely new entity. Beginning in the early 1980's and continuing over the next 20 years, supermarkets transitioned from selling 16% to 86% of seafood (Greenberg 2014, 9). Until this pivotal development, most of middle class america, for example, were only exposed to canned salmon (Greenberg 2010, 48). Unfortunately, the seafood industry transcending its previous local and seasonal constraints and opening to a wider market has come at a steep price, especially along the coasts.

As fisherman become sparse and local seafood markets are replaced by chain grocery stores, the maritime industry is becoming depersonalized. In the 20 years following the early 1980's, the same period supermarkets came to sell the overwhelming majority of seafood,

individual fisherman and independent fish markets went from controlling 65% of seafood trade to just 11% (Greenberg 2014, 9). Now, fisherman and seafood customers seldom interact.

Artisanal seafood markets once provided customers with information on the state of their local ocean and fish while facilitating personal exchange between maritime people and maritime customers. Simply put, seafood markets present the intimate relationship between seafood and ocean; without them, seafood is stripped of its contextual ecology and unfairly reduced to another drab product whose sole purpose is human consumption.

Fortunately, Malibu Seafood has withstood the hapless fate experienced by many like-markets and continues to be a point of personal contact between the ocean, the maritime industry and the seafood customer. Malibu locales drive by three seafood carrying grocery stores and Angelino's drive to the edge of the county, dozens of miles, to buy fillets at Malibu Seafood. While the Malibu Seafood fisherman no longer exclusively source their product from the local Malibu ocean like they did in the 1970's, their knowledge of the seafood industry has made the quality of their fish incomparable and has ultimately set themselves apart from the assemblage of seafood carrying grocery stores nearby.

Malibu Seafood sources their seafood from multiple locations, globally and domestically, in an adaptable and valiant effort to overcome strict fishing policies in their closest water source, Malibu's oceans, as well as to cater to increasingly globalized seafood preferences. Malibu Seafood's seaside location and appropriately corresponded food category of seafood facilitates a reconnection between people and food, in which the location of consumption is consistent with the type of food being consumed. Increasingly divergent locations of seafood production and seafood consumption, a concept referred to as geographical dislocation (Klein & Watson 2016,

407), has been intensified as transportation and preservation methods have become more efficient and resulting taste preferences have widened. Today, even seafood consumed along the coast tends to be outsourced; seafood can be purchased from the cheapest and most abundant source, usually imported. In many cases, the current global seafood model has, “decoupled the American consumer from the American coast and reattached [them] to more distant shores” (Greenberg 2014, 92). Independent, specialized markets and restaurants whose products and locations are compatible, like Malibu Seafood, preserve the intimate relationship between environmental, food and consumer.

Major cultural and environmental shifts were underway in America leading up to the opening of Malibu Seafood in 1972. The fishing industry suffered during the 40’s and 50’s from industrial factory pollution and the booming oil industry. Lack of government intervention or stringent policies surrounding environmental contamination permitted the ocean to become a dump site for waste. Effects of the environmental crisis were becoming more palpable to the American public and federal agencies were pressured into investigating the condition of our oceans; In one study conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, 584 out of 590 nationwide water samples contained significant amounts of DDT, “sometimes as much as 9 times greater than the limit” (Green 2015, 43). A wave of environmental activism transpired from the overwhelmingly inhospitable and perilous results of similar studies across the country.

In 1972, the same year Malibu Seafood opened, the Clean Water Act passed with the goal of all U.S. waters being swimmable and fishable by 1985. A few years later, the U.S. controlled fishing within 200 nautical miles of its coasts, almost the entire continental shelf where the majority of fish inhabit. The U.S.’s augmented ownership of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans

enabled the American maritime industry to boom aggressively, ultimately triggering an enormous depletion in marine life. While environmental regulations curbed marine pollution and American waters substantially recovered, compulsory fishing quotas were nonexistent and fishing methods were severely inadequate. Wild stocks, which reached their ecological nadirs, were beginning to recover from the previous decade's environmental pollution but were now imperiled of unsustainable fishing limits and deleterious fishing methods.

During the same time, real estate development was becoming more aggressive and more incessant, proving especially ruthless in coastal communities like Malibu, California. Across the country, private homes and beach clubs replaced maritime industries like oyster farms and processing plants along the shore. It was neither physically possible nor economically reasonable to catch, process and sell fish in the same location anymore. In Malibu, Marine Protected Areas and particularly stringent fishing regulations, which were put in place to curb the overfishing of the 80's, made it impossible for commercial fisherman like Mark Ridgeway and Jon Christianson to fish in the Malibu region exclusively and meet their own resource necessities.

In the last 50 years alone, seafood imports in America have increased by 1,476 percent with, "91 percent of seafood Americans consume [being] from abroad" (Greenberg 2014, 188), the majority being farmed fish. Considering the ecological destruction incited by irresponsible fishing methods in the second half of the 21st century, aquaculture has the ability to be a sustainable alternative to defunct practices like bottom trawling, blast fishing, poison fishing, push netting etc, not to mention the reduction in by catch as well as oil and sound pollution from boats.

Although conceptually aquaculture reconciles many of the environmental pitfalls of commercial fishing by protecting wild stocks and their affiliated ecologies, historically, farmed fishing has also proliferated environmental degradation. Both approaches, commercial fishing and aquaculture, have proven themselves unviable at times. Where commercial fishing can be distinguished from aquaculture is in its longevity and thus its refinement overtime; commercial fishing has existed long enough to adapt to subtle and dramatic environmental changes through enforced legislation and personal realization. In doing so, although wild stocks and marine ecosystems are not perfectly remedied, traditional ocean fishing has demonstrated its adaptability and therefore its continued potential. Where commercial fishing has time on its side, farmed fishing does not.

Aquaculture is a relatively novel endeavor to suffuse the global seafood industry and therefore has not had the ability to refine its own practices across lengthy periods of time in the way commercial fishing has be able to. Unfortunately, nitrogen waste, poor water circulation, overcrowding, and deoxygenated water have been characteristic of fish farms which have even spread disease and pollution to wild stocks (Green 2010, 49, 52). Farmed fishing does, however, eliminate many of the unpredictable aspects of traditional fishing like seasonality, population fluctuation, and changing quotas. The aforementioned uncertainties which place commercial fishers at the mercy of the natural world do not place the same constraints on farmed fishing. It is important to remember fishing has been considered one of the last foraging techniques to be practiced in post industrial civilizations. So, to be successful, fishers like Jon Christenson and Mark Ridgeway possess an all encompassing knowledge of ocean currents, wind patterns, and fish cycles as well as an understanding of the connection between each of these interacting

features. The intimacy shared between ocean and aforesaid fisher makes them categorically unrelated to the new breed of fishers, or more appropriately fish harvesters, who practice farmed fishing. Today many of our fish producers, namely those raising farmed fish, have as much or more fittingly as little understanding of the ocean's dynamic behavior as do the consumers who enjoy the fish of they produce.

The divergence in type of fisher is not merely a division in personality type and fishing experience. The knowledge Mark Ridgeway and Jon Christiansen hold has become increasingly lost in the current seafood industry. At Malibu Seafood, which sells a combination of wild caught and farm raised seafood, Ridgeway and Christiansen's specialized knowledge of the ocean and seafood industry has influenced where they source their products, wild caught or farmed. At Malibu Seafood, supplementing wild stocks with farmed fish is not only a necessary reality due to local fishing regulations, but in many cases, is also a welcome addition. For one, the average farmed fish is 15% fat while the average wild fish is only 6% fat (Greenberg 2010, 53). The taste and texture of fattier, farm raised fish are preferred by many patrons including Mark Ridgeway himself. Moreover, Malibu Seafood's introduction of responsibly sourced farmed fish has allowed wild stocks more opportunity to recover. Mark Ridgeway and Jon Christiansen have been able to apply their exhaustive knowledge of the seafood industry, as it exists at sea and on land, to execute a sustainable model for seafood production and consumption while also encouraging the reconnection between customer, seafood market, and ocean.

Analysis:

The maritime culture has shifted in Malibu over the last millennium. Malibu's Pacific Ocean was once a dependable marine resource, collected in conservative quantities and traded

within a regional network. Seafood harvested in the open oceans and along the coastal inlets of Malibu was eaten fresh at the site of collection or exported to neighboring communities. Seafood trading networks facilitated the growth of individual communities and provided an avenue of ecological and social connection between otherwise separate social groups. Across the globe during the same epoch, other seafood foodways were established within a similar geographical sphere. While today marine resources provide a modest amount of human sustenance and nutrition, its journey's rarely emulate the route maritime production took during the Chumash Era. Gaps in the site of production and site of consumption of seafood are wider than ever. The seafood industry has rigorously adapted to and perpetuated seafood's transition away from locality and short range distribution. In doing so, a cultural and ecological shift has ensued, power dynamics have proliferated, and a compression of time and space has accelerated.

As growing global interconnectedness and seafood accessibility emanates, distant interactions become more commonplace. Expanded foodways have, “[conquered] distance, geographical and cultural... a triumph of the liberal values of mobility and interdependence” (Issenberg 2007, 229). However, food is a powerful tool and accessibility should not necessarily be confused with economic or environmental effectivity. The neoliberal society posits markets should be guided by individual choice under the assumption, “citizens use their freedom reasonably and efficiently” (Martschukat & Simon 2017, 129). Thanks to flash freezing and transportation technologies, people living in a small, rural town in Colorado can go to the supermarket to buy saltwater fish. In the intimate moment said patron with their eyes closed and mouth open takes a bite of seafood, what is the difference between them and me, sitting on the shore enjoying a fish bought from Malibu Seafood? At first consideration, the

difference is ostensibly menial. The Colorado patron will not feel humid saltwater in the air or hear the waves licking the sand but through freezing and transportation advancements, can nevertheless enjoy integrity in the fish's texture and flavor.

Seafood foodways in this evermore globalized era conquer more spatial and temporal boundaries than any point in past history and therefore contribute to what David Harvey (1989), a distinguished Marxist economic geographer, would call time-space compression. Time-space compression refers to the the perceived shrinking of space and the simultaneous abbreviation of time as a result of increased economic activity through the more rapid movement of people, goods and information (**Warf 2014**). As a result of technological and communicative innovation, globalization has accelerated (**White Fuse Media Ltd 2016**), and, “the world is made to feel smaller even as social interactions are stretched over larger physical distances” (**Warf 2011**). From an insular perspective, globalization causes, “the whole world [to become] alike culturally and economically” (**Agnew 2015**). From that very same myopic view, someone eating seafood in Colorado and someone eating seafood sitting on the shore experience their food similarly. Author Ernst Jünger would describe this interpretation of world convergence as nihilistic, “in essence... being increasingly reduced... with a movement toward a zero point,” and, “little by little all areas are brought under [a] single common denominator.” However, culturally or geographically separate groups who mutually experience a greater sense of interconnectedness as a result of globalization do not necessarily share the same social or political context and therefore are not equally affected by globalization. A sweeping assertion that globalization breeds likeness, while at times accurate, can be an oversimplified reduction based on distorted assumptions. A diner enjoying seafood in Colorado does not share the same food experience as a diner enjoying

seafood on the coast. Because of cultural and geographical dissimilarities, structural arguments for lived experience are inadequate by, “[failing] to account for individual variation” (Klein & Watson 2016, 33). Increased technological advance which is representative of globalization has produced, “new global forms of exclusion and inclusion, [as well as] fragmentation and integration” (**White Fuse Media Ltd 2016**).

While, “the market is the primary area for choices today, especially neoliberal markets that emphasis the individual’s free choice,” (Klein & Watson 2016, 389), foodways carry “social information” (Martschukat & Simon 2017, 147). Widely disseminated foods reflect which cultures, regions and diets are considered valuable, with little regard to the its effect on recipient ecologies. When seafood is consumed along coasts, locality informs consumption in two opposing ways. For example, seafood consumption in Malibu reflects a local diet which has been relied upon the region since the Chumash. However in contemporary times, seafood is produced for tourism; seafood reflects “stability, age old tradition and respectable conservatism but thrives in conditions of globalization and change” (Klein & Watson 2016, 146).

Conclusion:

My paper focused on local and global seafood foodways through the lens of Malibu Seafood Market and Patio Cafe (Malibu Seafood), a popular seafood restaurant and market which has been apart of Malibu since the early 1970’s. Seafood has been a staple in the region since the Chumash occupied the land and remains a distinct part of food in Malibu. Food functions to create solidarity and to mark cultural groups. While the culture of Malibu has shifted considerably, Malibu Seafood reminds us of a forgotten Malibu, one with a quaint and rural feel. Unfortunately, persisting in Malibu comes with ever increasing risk. Wildfires,

landslides, and El Niño storms hound Malibu real-estate while seafood perishability, fishing regulations, and environmental pollution complicate the ability to collect and distribute seafood.

If there were no time constraints while I conducted my research, I would've spent more time with longtime Malibu Seafood costumers, both from Malibu or from the greater Los Angeles area, to hear individual stories of allegiance which have allowed Malibu Seafood to prosper for so long. Ideally, I would've investigated the supply chain and conducted interviews with the producers and liaisons.

This has been an especially meaningful project for me. I am a seafood enthusiast, and have always been fascinated by food production and consumption. I grew up eating at Malibu Seafood and have witnessed cultural and environmental shifts in and around Malibu while also watching Malibu Seafood remain. I would like to thank Mario Montaña for guiding me through this process and sharing in my passion for food. I would also like to thank Krista Fish for teaching my first anthropology class which enamored me and started me on this path. Thank you to Christina Leza and the rest of the Anthropology Department for making my field work possible and supporting me along the way.



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