

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

# Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**<sup>®</sup>  
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 114: Do We Need to Worry About  
Radiation and Mercury in Seafood

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Katie: Hi, and welcome to The Healthy Moms Podcast. I'm Katie from [wellnessmama.com](http://wellnessmama.com), and I'm here today with a friend and my favorite provider of seafood. Randy Hartnell is the president of Vital Choice Seafood, which is an amazing company that carries all kinds of wild-caught and sustainable seafood, and he and his wife, Carla, founded this back in 2001, and the mission of this company is to really provide consumers with high quality sustainable seafood and also to educate them about both seafood and other food choices and how that impacts their health. And I have him here today because I get a lot of questions about radiation and mercury in seafood, and he'll be able to clear them up. Randy was also a fisherman for more than 20 years, and he has an amazing incredible story. I can't wait for him to tell it. Randy, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Randy: Thank you, Katie. It's a pleasure to be here.

Katie: This is gonna be fun. I know we've gotten to talk in person before, and I think this will just be a continuation of those conversations of questions I have already asked you in person. But you have a long history of fishing, and we had a great conversation about this, but it started back when you were in college. So, can you kind of share that story of how you got started in fishing in the first place?

Randy: Sure. Yeah. I was getting an English degree at Berkeley, and I'm actually a Washington resident, and I had gone out of state, and the out of state tuition was pretty expensive. And so I needed to find a good summer job, but eventually it led me to landing a job on a boat in Alaska. And at the time I was planning to finish my bachelor's degree, go on to graduate school, and just fish in the summers, and what happened over the next two or three years is I fell in love with fishing, you know, out in nature. It's such a physical occupation, and one of the last of the hunter gatherer jobs where you're actually catching food for people, and I just totally fell in love with that. So when I got out of school, rather than go on to grad school, I ended up buying my own boat, and hiring my own crews, and fish for wild salmon for the next 20 years, along with a lot of others, species. So, it was a great lifestyle.

Katie: I bet. I know there's definitely this kind of a culture around fishing, and I know a lot of men that's like a very much of a hobby and a stress relief and something that they absolutely love, and that's amazing that you got to do it for so long. I haven't asked you this in person. Were you living on the boat at the time, or was that

just for fishing? I've always wondered that.

Randy: Good question. There are a lot of different kinds of fishing, and my primary occupation was salmon fishing, and salmon fishing where I'm just during the summer, a relatively short time of the year. And the nature of the fisheries is that you're catching these salmon as they're migrating back from the oceans headed up into their streams where they spawn, and you catch a small portion of them right before they go up the streams. And so, therefore, you're close to the shore, and you're not out there that long. It would typically be up four to six weeks, and so, during that time, yes, we would stay on the boat with them. After the season when the salmon run was over, we would go home or move on to the next fishery.

Katie: Gotcha. So you mentioned while catching salmon, that's a great place I'd love to start. I think there is a little bit more of an awareness now about the difference between wild-caught salmon and farmed salmon. And I know at least from my research there's a difference in the level of, for instance, astaxanthin, the pigment, the red pigment, in wild-caught versus farmed, and you can even see that in the grocery store if the two are next to each other, the difference in the color. But can you talk about why wild-caught is important and why you would wanna avoid, for instance, farmed salmon?

Randy: Well, there are a lot of reasons wild salmon is preferable to farmed salmon, and I don't wanna paint with too broad a brush. There are some farmed salmon that are better than others, and some people don't have access to wild salmon, so there are exceptions. But, in general, farmed salmon is just like pretty much every other industrially raised, you know, protein. It's raised in an artificial environment that's got a lot of things that real salmon, that wild salmon don't consume. So, consequently, from a nutritional standpoint, it's not as nutrient-dense as wild salmon.

You alluded to astaxanthin. Well, that's one thing that wild salmon get out in nature from their diet, algae, and krill, and whatnot. Farmed salmon don't get that, and salmon farmers add a synthetic version of that to their diet, you know, to mimic the pink flesh that's found in wild salmon, but it's really a synthetic version, so not nature-identical, you know. To add the nature-identical version that wild salmon get for free, it would be a lot more expensive. But that's just one of many nutritional differences. Wild salmon are a good source of vitamin D whereas farmed salmon have almost none. Wild salmon have a lot of selenium, which is...as we talk about mercury and contaminants, selenium is important for helping us handle those, and farmed salmon don't have that. And then there are the sustainability issues as well. I don't believe any credible environmental organization certifies farmed salmon or considers farmed salmon as sustainable or, you know, the best seafood choice whereas wild salmon, especially Alaskan wild salmon, is sort of on the super green list of every major environmental organization. So, those are just a few of the main differences between wild and farmed salmon.

Katie: Gotcha. I started researching just farmed fish in general for a blog post, and it almost, like, turned my stomach to see the conditions that a lot of fish are raised in and how that impacts the ecosystem of the ocean, because you're creating diseases in these closed environments but that are still connected to the ocean and all the problems that can come from that. And, on a personal level, when I was in high school, I was in 4-H, and they had a big focus where I was on agriculture and wanting to expose people to agriculture. And so several of the trips that we took, they took us through all these different agricultural places and showed us the kind of tours. And in hindsight it's hilarious, because one of the places they took us was Monsanto, and they were bragging about how they're doing all these genetic modifications, which, looking back, I'm just like, "Oh my gosh, I was in the eye of the beast." But they also took us to catfish farms, and I stopped eating catfish after I

saw how they raise them. They were feeding them dog food that was like moldy and just, like, spraying it off boats, and I haven't seen any ocean-farmed fish, but I would assume maybe it is similar to that. And, like, what is farmed fish in the ocean? What does that look like?

Randy: You know, we literally could talk for hours about the differences between wild and farmed salmon. One of my personal interests is something you mentioned, it's the impact of these salmon farms on the marine environment, because they're not necessarily segregated from the wild salmon runs, and in areas around the world where they've had salmon farms the longest, for instance, in Norway, the wild runs in those areas have been decimated. And I'm up here in Washington state, and north of us in British Columbia, they've located hundreds of salmon farming pens in the migration path of the wild Pacific salmon, and there are just a lot of problems there. So, like I said, from just about every way you look at farmed salmon, it's a problem, and I would encourage people that have more questions to do what you did and just Google farmed salmon, because there's all the information out there that you could ever wanna know about it.

Katie: Yeah. Absolutely, and I'll make sure...I know that you guys have some information, and I have a blog post as well, I'll linked to those. The questions I get so much even just on recipes on my site have to do with mercury in seafood, and, obviously, mercury, we know a lot of the problems that it can cause, and this is not something you want to consume in large amounts. But there seems to be a lot of misinformation when it comes to mercury in seafood, and I know we've had this conversation, and you have a lot of information about it. So, let's talk about that. Should we be concerned about mercury in seafood, and should we limit our amounts, or what should we know when it comes to that?

Randy: Great question again. One of the reasons that our business, I think, has been thriving for 15 years is because we provided people with a solution to that issue. Should we be concerned about methylmercury? You know, there are a handful of species out there that are typically top of the food chain predatory, you know, marine species and fish that do...they stick around for a long time. They eat at the top of the food chain. They bioaccumulate relatively high amounts of mercury, and you wouldn't wanna eat those very often.

Talking about the big tuna, as far as tuna, it often gets painted with a broad brush, and just avoid all tuna, but there are 10-pound tuna that live for 2 or 3 years, and there are 800-pound tuna that live decades. And both of those things have an impact on the amount of contaminants that you'll find in the flesh. So, what we do is source, you know, the safe end of the spectrum. In general, though, if you look around the world at the people that consume the most seafood, they tend to be the healthiest, and you find almost no evidence of toxicity from methylmercury. And in this country, you know, it's almost become a craze that people are so fearful of methylmercury that they avoid seafood altogether. And it's really unfortunate, because carefully chosen seafood, seafood like wild salmon and the smaller species like herring, and sardines, and the fish that don't live very long or that eat near the bottom of the food chain most contain just micro, minuscule levels of these contaminants, which it's pretty clear that almost all people are able to process without a problem.

Now, I wanna throw in a caveat. You know, as our knowledge of genomics evolves, there are some people who have a genetic predisposition where maybe they don't process these metals as well as others, but I think that that's pretty rare, but it does exist. So you may have some people out there who just cannot, you know, handle any amounts of these contaminants, but it's very rare, and, you know, there have been over 30,000 studies related to these fats found in seafood, omega-3 fats, and the vast majority show a health benefit. And the most sophisticated, credible studies almost have found consistently that the benefits of eating, again, seafood, not the top of the food chain predators that are high in contaminants, but most seafood is far more

beneficial, and the benefits vastly outweigh the risk. So, I would say to most people, you know, not to worry about mercury.

Katie: Yeah. I think you're right. I think that the fear of mercury, which is very relevant in some types of seafood has kind of transferred over to all of them, and especially women who have been pregnant, which are a lot of people listening. And, like, you're kind of given this extreme fear of any seafood because of the mercury, especially when you're pregnant, and a lot of women that kind of just continues in the back of their mind even after pregnancy. And I know, even from testing, there's a vast difference between different types of seafood and how they're raised and caught based on the mercury levels. And you also mentioned earlier selenium, and at least some of the research I've seen is that when there is enough naturally occurring selenium and iodine imbalance in the seafood, that actually helps the body handle the mercury. Is that true, or what are your thoughts on that?

Randy: Yes, we've got quite bit of information about that in our newsletter archives on our website, but essentially what it is is that one of the problems with methylmercury is it binds with selenium. They have a high binding affinity, and every cell in our body requires selenium for healthy function. And so if you have an excess of methylmercury that basically binds with the...the selenium binds with the methylmercury, and then it's no longer available for the cell use, and you get all kinds of problems. You know, I'm not a biochemist or a scientist, but the evidence seems to be that as long as you're getting adequate amounts of selenium it's not a problem, you don't run a deficit. And the thing about seafood is it's one of the richest sources of selenium, and in almost all ocean species you're getting a healthy dose of selenium along with the trace, you know, the very tiny amounts of mercury that are in most seafood species.

The exceptions to this would be, again, the big billfish, you know, marlin, and swordfish, and marine mammals. Some of the studies, you know, that kind of created this fear of methylmercury were actually done on populations of people who were eating marine mammals, pilot whales in Pearl Islands. And back when the FDA was trying to establish mercury guidelines, there hadn't been many studies showing any kind of a problem. And people that ate seafood, they went to this one study, again, on the Pearl Islands that showed these people had, you know, negative consequences from methylmercury, but they were eating pilot whale, a marine mammal, a large, long-living marine whale that had relatively massive amounts of methylmercury and other contaminants compared to the seafood that most of us can get in our grocery stores.

Katie: That makes sense. And I know another concern that I hear a lot of questions about, and I honestly don't know how to answer, is what about the radiation, especially in the wake of Fukushima. Is there a danger of radiation in seafood? And how do you know if seafood is safe or not?

Randy: Well, you can imagine, Katie. I mean, we are in the seafood business, and a lot of our fish come from, you know, the Pacific Ocean. And so we've got basically a steady stream of questions about this ever since the Fukushima tragedy happened. And, you know, as we always do, we look to the science, and we started sending our samples of our seafood to the most credible lab that we can find. There are a lot of sort of charlatans out there that will tell you they can, you know, test your fish or whatever. We found the most credible lab that's called Eurofins. They have labs around the world. We sent our samples to one, and I think they're in Louisiana, and we held our breath, because, you know, are we gonna be out of business here, or are salmon and other species full of radiation?

And we sent 16 different species. We sent them, I think, every year since, you know, because people are

worried that the radiation is coming our way. And the results have been extremely reassuring. We have those results on our website, but out of dozens of dozens of samples, we only had two that even broke the detection threshold. And, just for perspective, the detection threshold is on a scale of, I think...you know, I'm trying to think of the metric that they use. But, for instance, drinking water, drinking water is safe if it has no more than 400 becquerels per kilogram of these different types of radiation isotopes that they're looking for. The threshold for the equipment is 2 becquerels per kilogram. We had a halibut and a tuna sample that had 3 becquerels per kilogram. Again, 400 is considered safe. And then that was only two the first time we tested, and we've never ever had a detect in any of our fish since then. So, the short answer to your question is, again, people are frightened by the headlines, but the fact is that radiation does not seem to be impacting the Pacific seafood that we source.

Katie: Yeah. I love that you guys actually tested. That definitely is peace of mind for me, and we order pretty much all of our seafood from you guys at this point. We've talked about the negatives when it comes to seafood, but I want to switch gears and talk about the positives, because, like you said, a lot of people avoid seafood thinking that it's all tainted when that really isn't the case, and they're missing out on a tremendous amount of health benefits. You mentioned that a lot of the world's populations that are healthiest consume the most seafood, but let's talk about what the actual benefits of seafood are and why they're so important.

Randy: Well, as I said, you know, seafood is one of the most nutrient-dense foods that we have available to us. It's one of the last truly wild and natural foods that we have available to us. Again, there are areas where you would want to avoid it, but, in general, most seafood coming from the ocean is just incredibly healthy. It's also, you know, a rich source of these omega-3 fats. These are primarily the coldwater species, again, wild salmon, and we just spent a minute talking about omega-3s. I know we all hear about omega-3s. I'm not sure how many people really understand or appreciate just how significant these fats are, but, you know, life...and most people believe now that life evolved in the ocean hundreds of millions of years ago. And the very first brain, the very first icepod that transformed light energy into electrical energy was made up of these bioactive molecules, DHA and the EPA. DHA is the most just incredible bioactive molecule, and that was 500 million years ago, give or take a few millennia, and today we still require DHA for our brains, for our eyes, for our reproductive systems.

And the thing is that DHA doesn't grow in terrestrial. It is not found in terrestrial foods. The thing about it is it's so unsaturated. It's a highly polyunsaturated fat, and it oxidizes when it's exposed to air. And so you only get DHA out of the marine food web. Now, there are companies now producing algae and...but that's why seafood is so special and so unique, because it's a great source of these fats, these long-chain omega-3 fats that we absolutely require to have healthy brain function. Every cell in our body, but particularly our brain, you know, our neurons, every synapse in our brain requires DHA. And, throughout evolution, humans could convert a certain amount of, you know, the shorter-chain omega-3s found in plant foods, but what's happened now is the mechanism for that conversion is being undermined by all these industrial foods that are high in these omega-6 fats. And, you know, it's kind of a complex story, and I don't wanna bore anybody with it, but just sufficing to say that seafood and, again, particularly wild salmon, coldwater fatty fish are just incredibly rich sources of this priceless nutrient, these omega-3 fats.

Now, you can get them in supplements, but really throughout human history, we've got them in food. And one of my favorite people who talks about this is Dr. Michael Crawford who is in the UK. He says that, you know, if there was something better for our brains, and our eyes, and our reproductive systems, if there was a molecule that was better than DHA, nature would have found it after 500 million years. And when he said that

to me, I just thought, "Wow." I know that really kinda crystallized just how important DHA is. And now you look at what's happening around the world, we have an explosion in mental health disorders. I'm not saying it's all because people aren't getting enough of these special fats, but I think there's plenty of evidence that it's playing a role in mental health disorders, and now such as cancer and heart disease combined. And a lot of the scientists who have been working in this field for decades believe that the fact that we've basically taken these fats out of our diet is largely responsible for it.

Katie: Yeah. I agree. I've done that research as well, and we're very careful even, especially with my kids, to get them seafood now, because of the DHA and the brain benefits and all the research coming out about that. And I think you're right, that if there was a better one, we would have found it by now. I wanna talk specifically about pregnancy a little bit more, because a lot of listeners are moms and many are pregnant, and that's the time when a lot of them are getting advice to avoid seafood, especially large seafood like tuna, but a lot of them are getting advice to avoid all seafood. And that was never my approach, in fact, but it's controversial, but I will even eat sushi with raw fish if I know the source and I trust the chef, because I crave that while I'm pregnant. I crave seafood so much while I'm pregnant. But talk about that, why would we perhaps not want to avoid seafood in pregnancy, and, in fact, why would we maybe consider eating more of it?

Randy: Wonderful question, one of my favorite topics. And when Carla and I were starting Vital Choice way back in 2001, you know, I'd fished for a lot of years. I didn't really understand a lot of the nutritional aspects of seafood and that, so I started reading up on it, and what I learned is wild salmon is one of the very best foods a new mom or even somebody who is thinking about getting pregnant can consume. And especially once a woman is pregnant, you know, this fetus has a huge need for these molecules we're talking about, these omega-3 fats, especially in the last trimester. And I was reading a book by a Harvard doctor, Andrew Stoll. It was called "The Omega-3 Effect," or something like that. And I read this passage just about how vitally important these fats are for the developing fetus and the mother, and that's where the name of our company came from, Vital Choice. Our whole business model was going to be directed at educating and providing this optimal nutrition for pregnant moms that eat wild salmon. Like, my wife is a graphic designer, and some of our first mockups for our labels were pictures of little babies on the cans.

And we started a website called healthymom.com, which I think you and I or Seth and I had talked about, and we still have that, and that's dedicated to providing information and resources for new moms. But it just tears me up when I hear health professionals who are...I'm sure you know this, too. I mean, they're well-meaning, but when they tell moms to avoid seafood, it's probably the worst advice they could give them. They should say avoid, you know...choose carefully, you know, you wanna avoid the species we talked about earlier that are problematic. But really if you look at, again, the biggest most credible studies, there's one called ALSPAC, the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children in the UK, 14,000 mother-child pairs studied for, I think, closing in on 30 years now, and it was published in "The Lancet" a few years ago. And what they found was the advice to moms to avoid or limit seafood consumption is actually causing the harm as far as cognitive deficits. It's actually causing the harm it's intended to prevent. And the results were that women who ate the most seafood had kids who had the least developmental problems. And this was a huge study, and I know one of the authors, and he said...so he has very little patience for people who continue to tell women to avoid seafood. And, you know, the science is there to support it is one of the best things they should be eating, not the worst.

Katie: Yeah. I think with any food, the sourcing matters so much, but I love that you're spreading the message

of women getting enough fats through seafood and other sources, and I love that that was your kind of genesis story as well, is that you guys came to this from that angle and realizing how important it was.

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Katie: Let's talk a little bit about the difference between what you guys have and a lot of other seafood companies, because there are a lot out there, and, obviously, seafood is available in every grocery store. But there is a difference, and it's the reason I go through so much trouble to order from you guys instead of even buying fish locally. So, talk about what the difference is and what you guys do that others don't.

Randy: Well, it's not necessarily always different, but, you know, the difference is that we are passionate about this. It's been my life for 40, 50 years now, and my whole being, and our team, and our whole being is tied up. And, well, first of all, understanding seafood, understanding how perishable it is and how critical it is to take care of it versus most grocery stores hire people to run their seafood departments that can barely tell the difference between, you know, a slab of halibut and a slab of tuna, or maybe they can or let alone where it came from or whether it was a large fish that maybe had a higher mercury level versus a younger fish that didn't. It's just basically we curate fish that we wanna eat from areas that are known to produce the best quality, from people that...

Just like in every other endeavor, there are all kinds of fishermen out there. There are ones who just want the volume, to get paid the most that they can get. You know, there are those who are real conscious about quality, catch fish one at a time and, you know, take care of it. When it gets on the boat, make sure it's bled and packed in ice. And grocery stores for the most part, as we all understand, they're incredibly competitive, they're incredibly price-driven, and if they decide that they're gonna get wild salmon, they want the cheapest possible wild salmon that they can get. And then once it gets to the store, you've got a guy running the department who wants...you know, he's driven, his job depends on focusing on that bottom line. And, generally, and I know this because we've hired, we have a person who works for us who used to run a meat and seafood department at a grocery store. They hate the seafood, because these healthy fats that we were talking about earlier are so unstable, and they oxidize, and they go rancid, and then they taste fishy.

And many people think that seafood is supposed to taste fishy, because they've had so many bad examples or experiences. And he told me that they used to soak some of their fish fillets in buttermilk to try to get an extra day or two out of them in the grocery store. And seafood is a loss, you know, it's a loser. Most of it, or a good portion of it, gets thrown out for the reason that I'm talking about here. And so the difference is that we understand all this. We understand that seafood is perishable. We provide the very best that we can get. We flash freeze it, and vacuum seal it, and guarantee with no questions asked that, you know, it's going to taste like it just came out of the water. And the way that we can do that is we're not so price-sensitive. We had to make a decision a long time ago that if you're gonna compete on price you can't have quality for the most part. You know, our fish costs more because we're buying the best, we're spending more to take care of it, and we're guaranteeing that it's gonna be fantastic when you get it. And so those are the main choices, our differences, I would say.

Katie: Yeah, there definitely is a difference in taste. When we started ordering from you guys, every time I would make fish, my husband would be like, "Wow, this is the best one you've ever made. Like, what did you do different?" It went on like that for a while, and I was like, "Honey, it's not me. It's the fish that's actually better." But what do you carry? Because that's another thing, you don't carry every type of fish someone might find in a grocery store or a fish market, but you carry, like you said, curated ones. So, which ones do you carry, and why those particular ones?

Randy: Yeah. Before I get to that one, I just wanna say one other huge difference is there is a tremendous amount of bait and switch out there, secret fraud. There are just studies coming out almost every year showing that people are buying things that aren't what they are sold as. There was one species of Asian carp, I think, that was sold. This was just last year, I believe. It was sold as 18 different kinds of seafood in California seafood sushi bars. Farmed salmon is frequently, I'd say almost more than half the time, what you're getting when a restaurant menu says wild. This happened to me at least four or five times just in the last few months. It'll say wild salmon on the menu, but it's really farmed. So that's the other thing that we really offer, is authenticity. And, again, that's driven by people that are just trying to buy a cheap fish and sell it as an expensive fish.

So, as far as your question species, you know, we select fish that are sustainable. They have to be, you know, from a well-managed fishery. There have been fish that we've been asked, you know, customers want us to get, you know, Chilean sea bass is an example, but the fisheries are not well-managed. It may change, and if it does change, then we'll consider it. So these have to be sustainably fished from well-managed sustainable fisheries. We have to have access to really high quality fish. Alaska is a source for most of our seafood, just because they have a fantastic management system in place. It's been proven over the last 50 years, and it's coldwater fish, so it's really healthy and delicious. We know the people up there, and having been in this industry for so long, we have almost family-type relationships with a lot of our suppliers. I know some of the fishermen, and so we just are connected to the resource, and if we're not connected, you know, we look very closely at it. We have to, you know, check off all these boxes and be very great and have good quality. It's gonna be from this well-managed fishery and something that our customers want and are going to love, and I think most of our products qualify, if not all.

Katie: Yeah, I know. I don't wanna forget to mention that you guys have a discount for listeners, and the webpage is [vitalchoice.com/wellnessmama](http://vitalchoice.com/wellnessmama), and I'll make sure we link to that in the show notes as well if people wanna try it, but I appreciate the distinction here. There really is a difference. I was shocked when we

first made the switch, because there really is a big difference. I'd love to ask in an interview as well, what are three things that people don't know or understand especially about your area of expertise in research? And maybe we've already touched on a few of them, but what are those, and how do you answer those people?

Randy: You know, I think one of the things that I always enjoy the most is when people discover that fish actually tastes good. There are just a lot of people out there that think that they don't like seafood. I have had people come up to our booths, you know, visited our booths, I think, at some of the conferences, and they'll just kinda stand back, and wrinkle up their nose, and tell me how much they hate seafood, they don't do seafood. Oftentimes, over the years, I've offered to pay them. I say, "I'll give you a dollar if you'll try just a little bite here, and if you don't like it at all, I'll give you a dollar." I've never once lost one of those bets. So, there's just a general belief out there by a lot of people that they don't like seafood, and that's because they've gotten bad seafood. And so that's one of the things I really like to get across to people.

The other thing is, well, we did touch on this quite a bit, that seafood is something to be feared. You know, even if it tastes good, people are worried about the mercury or the radiation, and a lot of that is a result of just sensational headlines that really are not valid. I mean, there was one article published in the LA Times about how all Pacific seafood is radiated. Now, if you read down a couple paragraphs, it said, well, actually the levels are, you know, so minute that you would have to eat like 30 pounds of tuna a day, you know, which is ridiculous. So the second thing is that seafood truly is one of the healthiest foods you can eat, you know, if you curate carefully.

And then I think a lot of people think that fish is hard to cook, or, you know, "It's gonna stink up my house," or when actually you consume a lot of it, you guys do so you know how true this is, it's one of the easiest things to cook. And those fish swim around in a zero-g environment, and so the protein, the muscle flesh, is light. You know, we digest it easily. It cooks quickly. It's with just a lot of advantages. When it comes to cooking it, you take it out of the freezer, thaw it out, and in minutes, it cooks in 5 or 10 minutes. And so a lot of people are intimidated by fish, just because they don't have a lot of experience with it. But once you get the hang of it, it really doesn't get, you know, much easier than that. So I guess those would be three things that I wish everybody knew.

Katie: Awesome, and I agree. I think I was afraid of fish for a long time, and now it's my go-to if I'm, like, running behind or have a busy day, because it cooks so quickly and so easily that I'll almost always choose fish if I'm in a hurry.

Randy: One other thing, Katie, is... We've talked about, you know, freezing fish. Another thing, people think that frozen fish is inferior to fresh fish, and I just attended a fantastic talk on this subject here a few weeks ago. And truth is that 80% of people, or maybe even higher, think that fresh fish is superior to frozen, but then when you do a side-by-side taste test, it flips. Eighty plus percent people think that the previously frozen fish tastes better, and that goes back to these molecules that oxidize, get rancid, and taste fishy. And, you know, freezing is nature's preservative. When you freeze and vacuum pack a fish, you know, you protect it from degrading. You basically stop the degradation process. And so that is a big misperception out there that we're constantly, you know, trying to get across to people.

And the other thing is, you know, canned seafood, canned salmon is one of the quickest, easiest, most relatively economical product forms. I probably eat five times as much canned salmon and tuna as I do the frozen, just because it's so convenient. You just take a can out of your pantry, and open it up, and put it on a

salad, or pasta, or rice, or whatever you prefer in, and you got all those nutrients, and great flavor, and it just doesn't get much easier. And a lot of people are turned off to canned salmon, because a lot of companies put the lower quality fish in the can, and they don't have a very good experience. Something we do is we go to companies where we know that they're putting the best fish in the can, and that goes with our sardines, our tuna. And so I would advise people to consider canned versions for a pantry staple.

Katie: Yeah. That's a good point, too, and, on the note of frozen fish, I agree that the taste is actually better. But isn't most fish that is used on sushi that people consider really high quality, isn't most of that frozen first as well?

Randy: Absolutely. In fact, you would hope that it would be. I would not personally wanna eat a fish that just came out of the boat and had never been frozen, and that's because of parasites. Not all fish have it, but a fair amount of them do. These are sort of natural predators that have been around for millions of years, and the way that sushi bars get around the risk from this is they freeze it. They freeze the fish first, and so, you know, it's something that a lot of people don't like to talk about, but it's a reality.

You know, it's sort of like organic vegetables. I remember I was in an organic restaurant in New York, and I ordered this big, beautiful organic salad, and I was ready to dive in, and I looked down, and here's this little green inchworm cruising across my bell pepper, and I got really incensed that I applied the waiter guy, and I said, "There's a worm in my salad." And he said, "Oh, I'm so sorry. You know, we triple-wash all of our produce. But, you know, it's organic, and it's basically proof that we're not using any pesticides or, you know, anything like that." And all of a sudden he somehow kinda flipped it around to it was a badge of honor that I had this worm in my salad. And so, you know, when it comes to parasites and fish, I guess it's kind of the same thing. I mean, this is a wild animal, and these things exist in the natural world to a certain extent, but they become 100% harmless when the fish has been frozen or canned. In fact, they just basically vaporize, and then it's just sort of an arrangement of dispersed molecules that most people would never know were there.

Katie: Yeah. I'm glad we touched on that as well. And one of my favorite things from you guys is your salmon lox. But I wanted to ask you as well, since your fish is frozen, could the salmon be used raw or in something like sushi since it has been frozen?

Randy: Oh, absolutely. I mean, what is sushi but very high quality salmon that's been flash frozen, and, you know, in fact, if you go to [sushisafe.com](http://sushisafe.com), we actually have that website, it will forward you to Vital Choice. But, no, I mean, our salmon, all of our seafood portions are perfect for sushi. We have a product called tuna tataki, albacore tuna tataki, and it's basically a seared loin of this specific albacore tuna, and you take it out and semi-thaw, and you just slice it, and it is fantastic. If you've never tried that, I will highly recommend it. T-A-T-A-K-I, tuna tataki. We also have a salmon version of that, but it's really wonderful. It's commonly what we will take to dinner parties. If we're asked to bring something, we'll bring a couple of these sliced tuna tataki loins or salmon tataki loins, you know, long list, and we show you, and wasabi, and it's always the first to disappear.

Katie: I'll definitely give it a try. It sounds awesome. And we mentioned, obviously, your website. People can get the discount at [vitalchoice.com/wellnessmama](http://vitalchoice.com/wellnessmama). But if someone's new, where do you recommend they start when they get to Vital Choice?

Randy: Oh, that's a great question. Well, first of all, we have, you know, live chat. We have a team of fantastic customer service people, so when you have any questions, of course, you can go to our FAQ and search there,

you could call us up, we've got a 24/7 customer service line. We've got a great search feature on our website I usually recommend for people, and we do have a lot of products, and the website has grown quite a bit. You know, we have a salmon sampler.

People often don't know what's the difference between king salmon, and sockeye salmon, and silver salmon, pink salmon, all these different salmon offerings we have. We have a salmon sampler that is usually good. It's very popular for new people to try and contrast, compare the different species, but, by all means, just give us a call. We also have a great newsletter. Craig Weatherby has published more than 1,000 articles for us. He's been with us almost since the beginning and incredibly knowledgeable, always happy to answer emails to people who have questions. And so you can visit our newsletter archive and search to your heart's content about, you know, omega-3s and virtually any health condition that you can imagine, you know, where there have been studies, again, like this that are...thousands of studies that we've written on most of the major ones. So, I guess that's it.

Katie: I'll make sure we link to some of those as well for anyone who wants to see the testing, and the studies, and the things that you guys do. But, Randy, thank you so much for your time. I know a lot of people have a lot of questions about seafood, and you definitely have expertise in this area. Thanks for clearing up a lot of the misunderstandings.

Randy: Thank you for the opportunity, Katie. It's always a pleasure.

Katie: And thanks to all of you for listening. I'll see you next time on The Healthy Moms Podcast.

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