



# Promising Channels for Market Growth

PLACE

Growing the market for Alaska oysters  
**2024**



**Which B2C and B2B channels will maximize the reach of Alaska oyster products in CPG and foodservice?**

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This deck is part of a broader suite of resources that supports the [Alaska Oyster Food Roadmap](#).

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# 1 Executive Summary



1. **Fine Dining and Casual Restaurants** as Preferred channels for B2C and the most strategic entry point for B2B stakeholders



78%

of Established Oyster Eaters

57%

of Alaska Visitors

...prefer to enjoy oysters in foodservice settings, specifically fine dining. This removes preparation barriers and positions oysters as a special, occasional treat. However, **casual seafood restaurants, including those focused on tourists in Alaska, are also gaining popularity**, with 59% of Alaska Visitors and 55% of Established Eaters identifying them as a preferred option, especially for cooked oyster dishes.

**B2B**

perspective

**Foodservice is also seen as a strategic entry point**, due to fewer decision-makers, lower marketing costs, less competition, and more relaxed regulations. **Chefs, in particular, value the unique merroirs of Alaska oysters and are flexible with seasonal sourcing** of products. As key decision-makers in this channel, they are uniquely positioned to champion and strengthen the regional identity of Alaska oysters.

2. **CPG** emerging as a new channel, driven by the rise of **easy-to-prepare and convenient products**



Research indicates that home cooking of seafood is becoming more common

As eaters find ease of preparation and convenience in new products and formats (e.g., frozen & ready-to-eat) at supermarkets and specialty food stores, which are top CPG channels for Alaska oysters.

The entry point strategy should **initially focus on direct-to-consumer (D2C) sales** and small retailer partnerships to build brand recognition and optimize the supply chain to reduce costs. In Phase 2, once scalable shucking/canning infrastructure is established in Alaska and the supply chain is well-developed, the strategy could transition to a hybrid model, paving the way for partnerships with larger distributors.

## 2 Casual Dining as the Top Channel to Reach Alaska Visitors



**FOODSERVICE  
AS THE MAIN  
CHANNEL<sup>1</sup>**

**59%\*** **Casual Dining Restaurants** (e.g., Deckhand Dave in Juneau, Altura Bistro in Anchorage)<sup>1,2</sup>

**57%** **Fine Dining Restaurants** (e.g., The Cookery in Seward, Salt in Juneau)<sup>1,2</sup>

**31%** **Seafood Fast Food Restaurants or Food Trucks and Onboard Cruise Ship Dining** (e.g., Holland America Princess, Celebrity Cruises)<sup>1,4</sup>



**CPG AS AN  
EXPLORATORY  
CHANNEL FOR  
VALUE-ADDED  
CONCEPTS<sup>1</sup>**

**40%** **Specialty Food Stores** (e.g., seafood markets in the Lower 48, Alaska gift shops)<sup>1,2</sup>

**31%** **Supermarkets** (e.g., Kroger, Ralph's, Wegman's, Publix, Ingles)<sup>1</sup>

**24%** **Natural Specialty Grocers** emphasizing organic and natural products (e.g. Whole Foods Market, Sprouts, Trader Joe's)<sup>1</sup>

! \*These percentages indicate how many eaters prefer to purchase or eat oysters from/in that particular channel.

<sup>1</sup>FCL Validation Survey (N=200), 2024 | <sup>2</sup>Datassential Menu Trends, 2023 | <sup>3</sup>Secondary Needfinding Research, 2024 | <sup>4</sup>FCL Dscout Mission - "What's on Your Plate?" (N=60), 2024.

### 3 Top Touchpoints for Engaging Alaska Visitors: Shore Excursions

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#### AREAS

Inside Passage (56%)\*,  
Southcentral (54%),  
Interior (26%)



#### TOP PAID EXCURSIONS

Goldbelt tram (20%),  
day cruise (18%),  
bus tour to glacier (18%)



#### ACCOMODATION

Cruises (45%) or  
Hotels (30%)



#### TOP ATTRACTIONS

Mendenhall Glacier (26%),  
whale statue (12%), Totem  
Pole Trail (9%)



#### TRAVEL PLANNING RESOURCES

TravelAlaska.com, Official State of  
alaska Visitors Guide,  
ExploreFairbanks.com, etc.

\*These percentages indicate how many visitors engaged in said touchpoint, i.e., activity, experience, or resource.  
Alaska Visitor Profile 2022-2023 | Juneau 2023 Tourism Survey | Juneau 2023 Cruise Passenger Survey.

## 4 Fine Dining as the Main Channel to Reach Established Oyster Eaters



**FOODSERVICE  
AS THE MAIN  
CHANNEL<sup>1</sup>**

**78%\*** **Fine Dining Seafood Restaurants** (e.g., Craft (NYC), Providence (LA), The French Laundry (CA))<sup>1,2,3</sup>

**75%** **Casual, Full-Service Restaurants** offering table service in a relaxed setting (e.g., Red Lobster, Frontera (Chicago))<sup>1,2,3</sup>



**CPG AS AN  
EXPLORATORY  
CHANNEL FOR  
VALUE-ADDED  
CONCEPTS<sup>1</sup>**

**72%** **Supermarkets as the primary alternative** (e.g., Kroger, Ralph's, Wegman's, Publix, Ingles)<sup>1,2</sup>

**57%** **Natural Specialty Grocers** emphasizing organic and natural products (e.g., Whole Foods Market, Sprouts, Trader Joe's)<sup>1,2</sup>

**45%** **Specialty Food Stores** (e.g., fish market)<sup>1,2</sup>

! \*These percentages indicate how many eaters prefer to purchase or eat oysters from/in that particular channel.

<sup>1</sup>FCL Validation Survey (N=253), 2024 | <sup>2</sup>FCL Needfinding Survey (N=368), 2024 | <sup>3</sup>FCL Dscout Mission, "What's on Your Plate?" (N=60), 2024 | <sup>4</sup>FMI - The Power of Seafood, 2024.

# 5 Premium Channels as the Main Setting for Oysters in the U.S. Market



## FOODSERVICE

### Fine Dining and Casual Seafood Restaurants

Oysters are a staple in fine dining establishments, including oyster bars and seafood restaurants, as well as in casual seafood dining spots, such as restaurant chains (e.g., Legal Sea Foods) or bistros.

Oysters often **have their own section on the menu**, labeled “Raw Bar” or simply “Oysters,” and are typically served as appetizers. In the South, oysters are commonly served fried, grilled, or in sandwiches like Po' Boys.

### Oyster Bars on Cruises

Oysters are typically served in '**oyster bars**' or as a **premium offering** in specialty restaurants under the 'Raw Bar' section of the menu (e.g., Royal Caribbean's Hooked Seafood and Norwegian Cruise Line's The Raw Bar).



## CPG

### Specialty Stores and Online Outlets for Premium Oysters

High-end, premium oysters, whether raw and fresh or frozen (i.e., whole, half-shell, shucked meat, meal experience kits) can be found in premium B2C online stores across the U.S. (e.g. Taylor Shellfish Company, White Stones Oysters, and Hoopers Island Oyster Co), as well as in **niche specialty food stores** (e.g., Surfis Culinary District in LA, Citarella in NYC).

### Supermarkets and Natural Food Stores for More Affordable Options

Oyster value-added products (e.g., shucked and seasoned tinned meat) and more affordable options (i.e., frozen oysters) can be found in a variety of stores, ranging from **large supermarkets and mass merchandisers** (e.g., Walmart, Target) to **natural food stores** (e.g., Whole Foods, Sprouts, Trader Joe's).

# 6 Considerations for B2B: Entering Foodservice

**Foodservice in Alaska as the most strategic entry point:** fewer decision-makers, lower marketing investments, fewer direct competitors, and more relaxed regulations and certification processes than retail.

Additionally, the market has a strong appreciation for unique merroirs and offers greater flexibility for seasonal products. Leveraging chefs in this channel also provides an opportunity to reinforce the regional identity of Alaska oysters.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENTERING FOODSERVICE

### High volume requirements:

Success in foodservice depends on the ability to fulfill large orders and adhere to reliable delivery schedules.

### Direct relationships with producers:

Foodservice buyers appreciate working directly with producers. Personal connections behind ingredients resonate deeply with them. Promote farm-to-table experiences for direct oyster purchasing.

### Uniqueness over consistency:

Foodservice buyers value seasonality and quality. They are open to occasional gaps in product availability, as long as there is a clear commitment to reliable delivery when agreed.

### Summer opportunity in the Lower 48:

During the summer, warm waters in the Lower 48 degrade oyster quality, creating an opportunity to supply Alaska oysters in this off-season period.

### Scale strategically:

In the Lower 48, begin by targeting smaller seafood restaurants that prioritize quality over volume, then expand gradually to larger, more regulated sectors like larger seafood restaurant chains, which have stricter volume and regulatory requirements.

*"We try to source as much local produce as we can for as long as possible, but when summer hits and the waters here get really warm, Alaska oysters could be a great opportunity." - **Small premium seafood restaurant chain in the Lower 48***

*"We prefer to buy our seafood directly from the farmers, prioritizing local farmers." - **Small premium seafood restaurant chain in the Lower 48***

# 7 Considerations for B2B: Strategies for Entering CPG

## PHASE 1

### Initial focus on D2C (Direct-to-Consumer)

**Start with D2C sales and partnerships with small B2B retailers** to ensure healthy growth in the first 2 years. **Avoid large distributors initially** to maintain control over margins and avoid costly regulatory and certification requirements.

**Build strong relationships with small B2B distributors** who align with your brand and values.

**Sell via third-party distributors or your own warehouse to reduce costs**, as shipping fees are passed onto the consumer.

**Streamline the supply chain** by minimizing intermediaries and **locating shucking and cannery infrastructure close to the sourcing area** to improve margins and maintain control over product quality and delivery timelines.

**Develop online marketplaces to increase product availability.** Be cautious of expensive wholesale portals during the scaling phase.

**Position your brand** to justify larger distributor partnerships as demand grows.

## PHASE 2

### Transition to a hybrid distribution model

**Shift to a multi-pronged approach that combines D2C and larger retail partnerships**, such as entering supermarkets in the Pacific Northwest.

Keep in mind that securing frozen and premium distributors requires demonstrating **substantial demand** for the product.

*“Setting up an efficient supply chain is key, but it’s complex, as building strong, trusted relationships with distributors is crucial for setting up effective sales channels.” - **Premium tinned seafood company***

*“To guarantee success at the beginning, it’s important to keep your supply chain as short as possible. Once you’re partnered with a company like UNFI, you’ll face a complex system of charges, including buybacks, in-store marketing fees, discounts, and promotional expectations that change with the seasons. Essentially, you end up adapting to their demands, which are often driven by their need for higher margins.” - **Premium tinned seafood company***

# 8 Considerations for B2B: Entering Retail via Large Supermarket Distributors

## CERTIFICATION PROCESS

- Distributors **require farms to undergo certification** for product distribution, including both online and in-person audits to ensure compliance.
- **Timeline varies depending on farm readiness**; this process typically takes a few months.
- **Different procedures apply to farmed vs. wild products.**

## SEPARATE DEPARTMENTS FOR CATEGORIES: Fresh/frozen seafood vs. shelf-stable products

**Supermarkets who sell fresh/frozen seafood and shelf-stable products are managed by separate departments.** Each category requires specific strategies to navigate. As an Alaska oyster producer or CPG tinned seafood company, **ensure that you connect with the appropriate department to ensure alignment with their specific requirements and expectations.**

## REGIONAL PREFERENCES

- **Distributors prioritize local sourcing, with product selection varying by region.** For example, stores in the Pacific Northwest may stock different products than those in the Northeast.
- **Alaska oysters can gain traction** in large supermarkets in regions with strong Alaska-origin product appeal, such as **the Pacific Northwest.**

## TARGET DISTRIBUTORS WITH ESTABLISHED CONNECTIONS TO ALASKA SEAFOOD

Leverage distributors with established relationships and distribution networks in Alaska's seafood industry as an easier entry point.

*“You might see seafood products in the stores in the Pacific Northwest that are different from what you might see in the northeast part of the US, right? Because they'll try to source more regional when possible.”*

**-Large supermarket distributor**

# 9 APPROACH

## How FCL Arrived at the Most Recommended Channels for Market Growth

### SOURCES

**150+ National and International Kelp Products and Dishes** (*websites and top U.S. supermarket immersions*)

**18 Datasets** (*SPINS, Mintel, Datassential, Nielsen, etc*)

**899+ eaters surveyed** through quantitative and qualitative research

**14 interviews with B2B stakeholders** (including R&D chefs, including an Indigenous chef, CPG brands, large distributors, and food historians)

Find the full bibliography: [here](#)

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**Identified** existing kelp-based CPG products and dishes featuring kelp by reviewing inventory at the largest supermarkets and online stores, as well as menus at popular foodservice establishments across the U.S.

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**Built** a database of kelp CPG products and dishes, organized by brand/restaurant, category, price, format, attributes, and featured narratives/branding.

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**Conducted** primary research focused our audience – Established Kelp Eaters and Alaska Visitors – to pinpoint their preferred CPG and foodservice channels.

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**Analyzed** where these eaters go to eat kelp and purchase kelp products.

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**Compared** findings with current market data, including industry reports, for additional insights on eaters and how to reach them

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**Validated** findings with prioritized B2B stakeholders, uncovering key considerations and strategies for entering the recommended channels.

# THANK YOU!

Questions? Please contact us at:  
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Visit the [Southeast Conference website](#) to access the Roadmap Resources Hub