

MT. COOK  
ALPINE  
SALMON

# Saikou

SUSHI GRADE SALMON



Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon produces virtually all commercially available Alpine King Salmon in the world





## Scott Murray

MASTER ITAMAE

As you would probably know, it takes a lot to knock a thirty-year veteran chef and restaurateur over. We tend to be a cynical lot.

In December 2009, it happened to me twice in the space of 24 hours, with the same product.

Last year I received a call from my cousin asking me to give my opinion of salmon grown on a farm located in the remote mountains of New Zealand. After discovering it was fresh water raised salmon, I was pretty skeptical. Restaurant mythology had taught me to think saltwater salmon was best. They arrived bearing several roughly hewn fillets, which enhanced my cynicism to the point I told them I had already eaten!

I set about preparing several sushi and sashimi samples for them to try and immediately noticed the salmon's subtle aroma (as opposed to its stronger smelling sea-farmed cousin). It gave me the impression of being ultra-fresh. There were several other apparent differences: the flesh was somewhat denser, the inter-muscular fat much less defined and its color carried lighter tones of orange. I was drawn to try some sashimi.

I did not receive the expected trout-like flavor, instead I was taken aback by its sweetness and subtlety. Its texture was firm to the bite and it was more akin to something free range, as opposed to farmed. In fact everything about this fish was comparable to wild salmon, including the natural color variations between fish. I started to enjoy the afternoon, serving them 16 salmon courses over the following three hours.

Later when my wife (who has zen-like smelling abilities) was cleaning up my inevitable mess, she commented on the lack of the usual strong salmon-smell in the kitchen. Overall, I was dumbfounded by this first experience of what I have now come to view as almost a separate species of salmon – New Zealand Alpine Salmon.

The next day I was taken aback for the second time. This time it was trying a frozen sample of the same fish. Freezing salmon in the sushi game is a common practice and I know the usual results. This was different. It was hard to believe that it had been frozen, so 'alive' was the texture and taste.

That day I bought stock in the company. So did my wife. So have some of our friends and family. My continued enthusiasm for the product eventually led to the company offering me a job. I accepted on the condition that the company indulges my passion, by producing the world's first specifically grown and harvested sushi grade salmon – Saikou Salmon.

I have experienced several high notes with Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon since my introduction.

I have repeatedly served dishes (including sashimi) to knowledgeable people without them identifying that the entire product used had been frozen. I also had the pleasure of sitting in the boardroom of a significant Japanese salmon distributor and told our salmon flavor was the most highly prized of their salmon line, which includes product from Norway, Chile, Australia, Siberia and other New Zealand companies.

I've also heard the same comment first hand from a sushi chef who prepares a specific sushi that is served on the Emperor of Japan's table.

I hope you take the opportunity to try Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon, especially our sushi grade Saikou Salmon and enjoy it as much as I enjoy being part of growing it.

“Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon is the  
benchmark for all salmon”  
Scott Murray



## THE MYSTERY OF WHAT MAKES OUR FISH SO SPECIAL

It is undisputable that Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon looks and tastes different from any other farmed salmon in the world. It is comparable only to wild King Salmon.

Lay it next to any other salmon and instantly it is visibly identifiable for its thin inter-muscular fat lines. The taste is unlike any other salmon. It can be clearly selected in a blind taste test. It is sweet on the palette with an uncluttered taste and has virtually no fish oil aftertaste prevalent in other farmed salmon.

The texture is also a clear give away; the firmer more muscular texture gives a pleasant 'al dente' feel in the mouth. It has often been noted that when cooking, its low and pleasant odor makes it distinguishable as well.

While no one knows for sure, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that there are three significant environmental factors unique to our farm that combine to give our salmon its rare and unique qualities.

## 1

### PURE GLACIAL WATER FROM THE SOUTHERN ALPS OF NEW ZEALAND

Our water is so pure, you can drink it both above and below the farm, and it is equal to many of the high-end bottled mineral waters. Fed from snow and glaciers it is cold year round; 43°F (6°C) in winter to a maximum of 61°F (16°C) degrees in summer.

The natural glacial 'till' (caused through suspended minerals in the water) protects the fish from excessive sun exposure in the height of summer, as the fish dive deeper to avoid the sun's penetrating rays.

The color of the water feeding our farm is world famous and features in many post cards. Depending on recent snow or natural glacier melt, the alpine lakes' water color can change from a translucent blue/green to an opaque turquoise. Interestingly the flesh of our salmon can take on both of these translucent and opaque characteristics.

Over the years our staff have come to believe that when there are more fish with this rare opaqueness in the water, we are about to have a great harvest. They are the ones our staff would choose for themselves.



The sheer isolation of our farm means the water is pristine with no agricultural or environmental pollution



We have the perfect environment & farming conditions for salmon

## 2

### SWIFT FLOWING CURRENTS

Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon is situated in a man-made hydro canal running between two alpine lakes, Lake Tekapo and Lake Pukaki. These two lakes are recognized as two of New Zealand's most outstanding natural landscapes.

The hydro canal is the perfect environment for salmon farming. Year round the average water flow is 130 cumecs (over 2 million gallons per minute, or 7.5 million litres), making it the highest water flow through any salmon farm in the world. It also means our fish swim all day against swift 5.6mph (3.5m/sec) currents, making them physically fitter than any other farmed fish in the world.

The high water flow, combined with the purity of water, means we have never had a disease related mortality at the farm. Not a single fish.

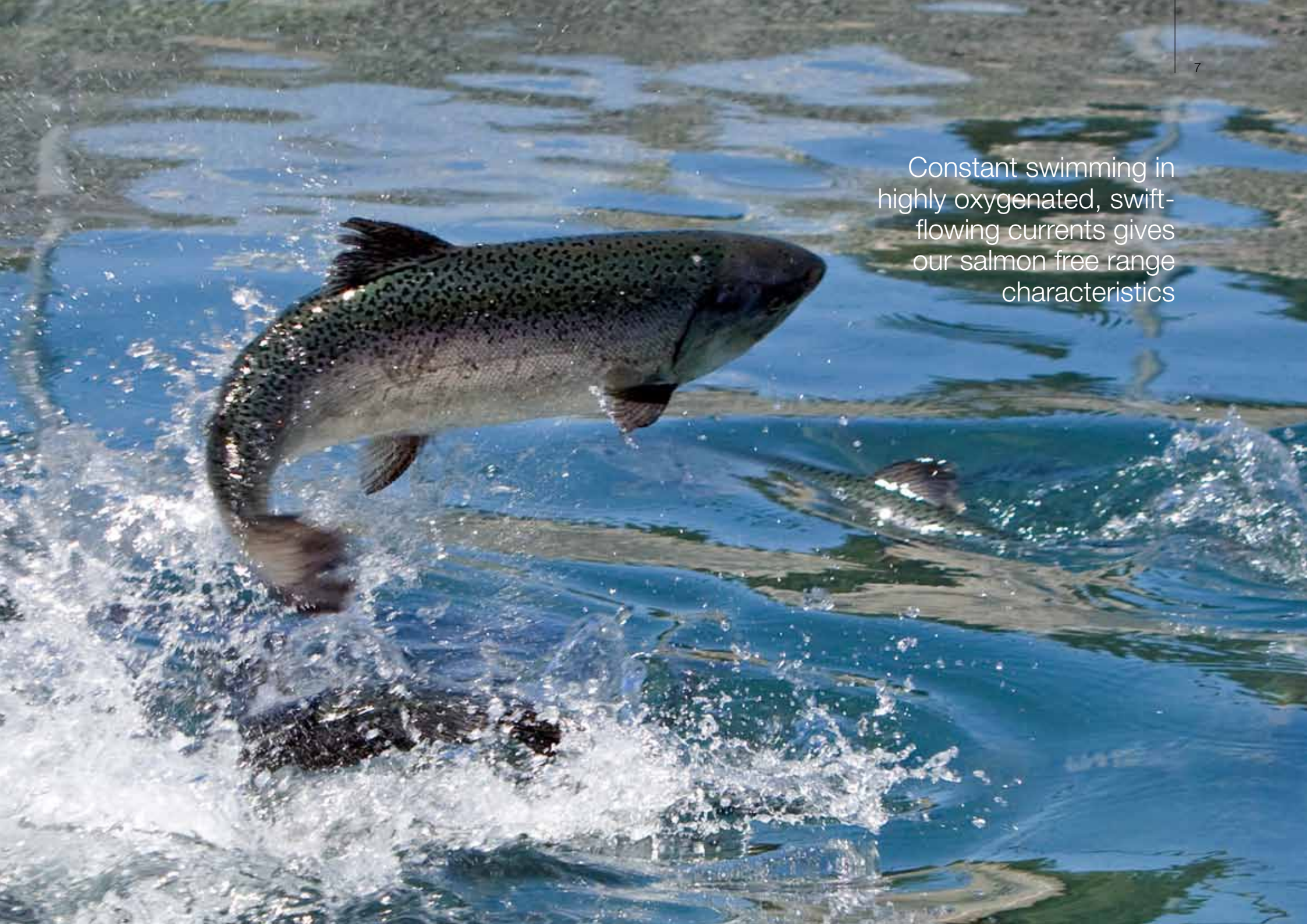
It also means we don't have to mess with nature. We are eco-sustainable and GMO free. We don't use antibiotics. Our fish are naturally parasite free and do not have the algae taint present in other fresh water farmed species. Having lived only in pure glacial water all their lives, our salmon are free of chemicals, mercury and other heavy metals.

## 3

### ALTITUDE

At 1969 (600m) feet above sea level, Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon is the world's highest salmon farm. There is nothing but wilderness between our farm and the mountains. High in the mountains is also where elite athletes train to develop higher red blood cell counts. This may be part of the mystery as to why our fish have a different taste and texture; it may also be a factor in why our fish occasionally have the bleeding characteristics similar to King Salmon in the wild.

Constant swimming in highly oxygenated, swift-flowing currents gives our salmon free range characteristics



## WHAT GOES INTO PRODUCING SAIKOU SUSHI GRADE SALMON?

The key to producing a specific sushi grade salmon is an unbroken chain of care and attention to detail. Every person involved in growing, harvesting, processing and transporting our Saikou Salmon have an intimate understanding of what we are striving for. Simply producing an A-grade salmon is not good enough.

### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS INCLUDE:

- ③ **Growing fish in optimal unstressed conditions**  
Plenty of space, fast flowing water and as little human intervention as possible.
- ③ **Attention to feeding regimes**  
Environmental conditions like water and air temperature, humidity and even wind velocity can affect the salmon's feeding regime. Though expensive, our staff still regularly feed by hand to monitor our fish feeding patterns. We also de-feed for an optimal time before harvest resulting in a cleaner taste.
- ③ **Using only the finest feed harvested from the southern oceans**  
Free of chemicals commonly found in northern hemisphere feed.
- ③ **Feeding for taste and texture, not for maximum weight gain**  
Overfeed anything and it will end up with high levels of fat. Compare our salmon to overfed sea caged salmon and you will see why bigger is not always better.
- ③ **Harvesting at the ideal age and weight**  
Constant sampling of our year-two fish means we harvest at the optimal time for sushi, resulting in a weight range of 6.6lbs – 7.0lbs (3kgs – 3.2kgs).



Grown for taste and texture, not maximum weight gain

Saikou Sushi Grade Salmon  
represents an unbroken chain of  
care and attention



- ③ **Not stressing the fish during the harvesting**  
Skilled staff and good farming practices mean we don't need to use any oil-of-clove as an anesthetizing agent during harvest (which leaves a strong residue taint in the flesh).
- ③ **Killing in a fast humane way**  
We use both mechanical stunners and Iki-jimi (on demand).
- ③ **Precise cutting for optimal bleeding and immediate insertion into ice slurries**  
The chilling down and bleeding processes take place simultaneously resulting in a better quality finished product.
- ③ **Careful handling in small loads**  
To ensure fish are not bruised or damaged in any way (from harvesting on the rafts through to the processing facility) we use only small loads of between 20 and 60 fish at a time. Again expensive, but the results are worth it.
- ③ **Our processing meets HACCP international standards**  
Our processors are of the highest quality and greatest experience. The chain-of-cold is observed with the narrowest margin of tolerance throughout the processing procedure. Bacterial assays are standard protocol. Random samples are taken from every processing run to ensure they meet Saikou grade before export.
- ③ **Frozen items are blast frozen in minimum time**  
To ensure our frozen product can be "as fresh when thawed", we blast freeze to at least minus -0.39°F (-18°C).
- ③ **Transportation is carefully vetted**  
International best practice is followed by world leading providers in transportation from New Zealand to individual markets. The chain-of-cold is preserved throughout. Temperature monitors are placed in shipping containers and electronically observed throughout transit. Our international agents are hand picked to ensure Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon standards are maintained.



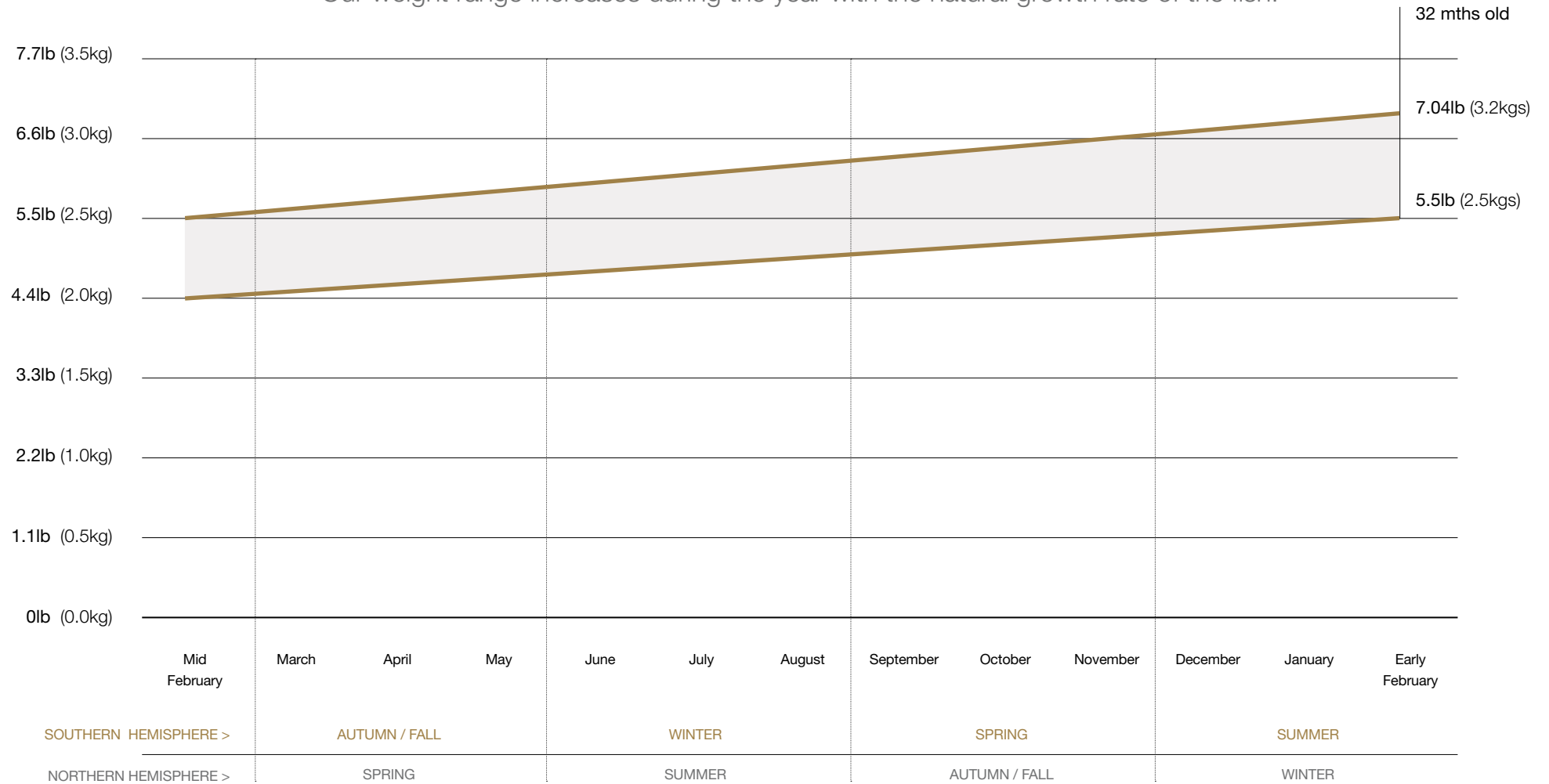
Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon has never had a disease-related mortality at the farm. A complete ban on the import of salmonoids and gametes into New Zealand protects against the introduction of new diseases

The standard of Saikou Sushi Grade Salmon is observed with pride



IKI-JIMI ON DEMAND

Saikou Sushi Grade Salmon is grown to a natural 'free range' life cycle.  
 Our weight range increases during the year with the natural growth rate of the fish.



## SAIKOU SALMON SEASONAL WEIGHT RANGE



Our Alpine King Salmon has the lowest intramuscular fat of any salmon in the world and twice the amount of Omega3 as Atlantic Salmon



Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon are eco-sustainably farmed, and free of GMO, diseases, parasites, chemicals, mercury and other heavy metals



Lacking odor and residual fats, Saikou Sushi grade salmon has a clean refreshing flavor and moist texture when cooked.



One of the unique characteristics of Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon is its ability to be virtually indistinguishable from fresh-chilled product when frozen and thawed correctly

## TO ORDER

### USA

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### For salmon related questions please contact:

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## TO VISIT OUR FARM

Location: Tekapo – Pukaki Hydro Canal, Mt Cook

South Island, New Zealand.

PO Box 2448, Wakatipu 9349, New Zealand



Picture perfect. The Southern Alps of New Zealand are one of the last pristine environments in the world. The glacier-fed Lake Pukaki shows the beautiful opaque turquoise color that makes it so famous. The Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon farm sits just above the 'stilling basin', (the small lake to the right of the picture). It is a stunning place to both work and play

[www.mtcookalpinesalmon.com](http://www.mtcookalpinesalmon.com)

