

Alan Lovewell: Yes. So, a brief little background. I came from the East Coast. I came out here for school, went to UCSD. I grew up in a place similar to this, small coastal community, a bunch of harbors, a lot of fishermen, and a lot of seafood. Came out here and found out that most of the seafood that everyone was eating wasn't coming from the ports here, that the seafood that we were eating was coming from all over the world, was coming from San Francisco, was coming from the East Coast, the folks weren't actually eating the seafood that was being produced here. That has a lot of significant impacts, sort of with the coastal communities and the people's law of one. Folks don't really know where the seafood comes from anymore, right? So, folks, when you go to a restaurant and you go order some Chilean sea bass or you order some striped bass or lobster or whatever, you don't really know where that came from. Although it's delicious, it's important for the resource to know where it came from and who caught it for you. The same thing with the fishermen. The fishermen, they don't know who's buying their seafood. They have no sort of incentive to do the right thing or fish sustainably there. For them, it's just going out and getting as much seafood as possible and not really thinking about who's consuming it. So, there's this big disconnect. So, this project, this community-supported fishery that I started was really aimed at getting people connected, so that when you guys go to eat your seafood, if you guys go get salmon or you get halibut or you get sand dabs or whatever, that you know who caught it, you know where it came from, and you also know that you're supporting a harbor like this, right? If this harbor was to disappear, you guys would still be able to get seafood, right? I mean, you guys could go to the grocery store and get it, but these guys would have lost their livelihoods, and it would have had a serious impact on Santa Cruz on the waterfront and also the greater community. So, by reconnecting folks to the local source of seafood, we hope to sort of create a little bit more support for the local harbors. The fishermen here, like Greg, other fishermen along the docks who depend on this for a livelihood. This is their job, and they do it because they love to fish. They love to be on the water. They want to get fresh seafood to you guys. So, that's sort of what I came here to do, and we started in January. We're about five months in, and people are pretty excited. We do this between Boulder Creek to the north and all the way down to Carmel Valley in the south. So, we cover a pretty broad area, and we help fishermen out from here, Moss Landing, and Monterey as well. Yes, so that's pretty much the basics of how I operate this with a business partner of mine by the name of Oren Frey. He operates down in the Monterey end of things. He lives down there. Then Greg is the critical component. He owns the restaurant, and he also does all the processing. So, any time we get fish from fishermen down here, he's the one that cuts it up, fillets it, cleans it, and bags it for our members. So, we sort of created a little bit of a collaboration, if you will, for getting fresh local seafood to folks.

Male Speaker: Roughly how much fish and things do you distribute?

AL: Per week or...

MS: Yes, per week.

AL: Yes, so it depends on the species. So, the interesting thing about fishing is that, you catch a pound or five pounds of fish from the ocean, that doesn't mean that you get five pounds of fish on your plate. What you end up is what's called a yield. So, you have to fillet and clean it. You say we have five pounds of fish, when we clean it, you actually only end up with between two

and three pounds of fish. So, we'll distribute something like three to four hundred pounds of clean fish, but we'll actually end up buying more, like six to nine hundred pounds, depending on the species, because some species, right? It's like fifty percent. You clean it, you get fifty percent of the fish. Some of it is really bad. You clean it, you cut it. You only get fifteen to twenty percent of that fish that you can actually eat. So, we also offer the opportunity for folks to do – buy whole fish so that they don't end up with so much waste because there's still a lot of meat on there. Like the head has a lot of meat, between all the bones has a lot of meat. You can do a lot of fish stock and stuff like that, but typically that stuff just gets thrown away. So, we're trying to also get folks to eat more whole fish because you get more of the fish that way. It takes less fish from the sea to produce fish on your plate.

MS: Where did you come from the East Coast? Because I go over there a lot.

AL: Martha's Vineyard, a little island in Cape Cod. It's about fourteen thousand people, a hundred-square-mile, little island. It's where Obama goes to vacation in the summer. That's how people know about it now. Clinton was out there when he was in his presidency. So, it used to, back in the day, be a whaling town. Whaling vessels would be from there, they would stop there. It became a fishing town, and now it's really mostly tourism because the fisheries have pretty much – the local fishery there is in pretty rough shape, which is another reason why I got into fisheries because I was just seeing that happening everywhere.

MS: Do you take percentage of the profits of the fish?

AL: Just enough to make ends meet, essentially to pay for all our expenses. We haven't been able to take any profits from this yet because we just started and we had to buy a whole lot of stuff to get this thing going. But eventually, the idea is that as we grow, as we get more members, and as fishermen distribute through us more, hopefully it'll be like a job. Right now, it's a job without pay. It's more of just a important project that I think has potential to create jobs for ourselves as we just essentially coordinators, folks that are responsible, because we do all the marketing. We do all the web stuff, all the web design, all the graphic design, all that stuff.

MS: Is it cheaper to get this fish local or buy it or outsource to maybe wherever else you can buy fish from?

AL: We pay more. Part of our program is that these guys could sell – I'll give you an example. It depends on the species. So, I'll give you an example. One fish called a sablefish or black cod. It's a deep water fish about – it gets between five to twenty pounds. It's caught in like two thousand feet of water. It's really delicious fish. Really buttery, like really silky smooth flesh. That usually gets sent out to Japan, where they're willing to pay – they'll pay \$9 a pound for that. So, they could sell this fish to the Japanese folks, if there was a more efficient distribution system to them. But what we're trying to do is get folks to pay more for it here, because if you buy it and you were to get it at a restaurant here, people don't want to pay more than \$4 a pound for it, usually. So, what we're trying to do is increase the value of that fish so that we recognize that we should be eating it here and not sending it to Japan. But then other species, like salmon, it'll sell for \$6 a pound. We'll pay seven to seven and a half for it just because we want to get it and we want to make sure that we're eating it here. So, there's ways in which we're trying to

improve the value. Same with sand dabs and other species that typically people aren't fishing for because it's a pain. It's a lot of work. You spend hours and hours a day to fish for it, and you'll get a hundred pound maybe, and for \$3 a pound to \$100 for a whole day of work. Then you have to cover fuel. You have to have your permits. You have to worry about expenses on your boat. It's not a whole lot of money, so a lot of guys don't fish for it. But if we can give them a little bit more money, it makes it worth it for them, and they can go fishing for species that typically isn't being utilized and it's really abundant out there. So, there's different sort of ways in which we're trying to help them out.

MS: So, do you have any investors looking at this as like Intel to make this a better program or...

AL: We thought about that, and I think the investors that we want to have are the local members. The investors that we want to have are the fishermen. If we can get those two folks to sort of invest more time and money into this, then I think that'd be the more organic and grassroots way of doing it. I think if we were to inject some sort of investment into this program, you start looking for – these investors are clearly looking for return, right?

MS: Yes.

AL: Return on their investment, and what that does is that that can put some unhealthy sort of drivers in your system and expectations in your system that may not necessarily be healthy for the fishermen and fish.

MS: So you want to really keep this local?

AL: Yes. Exactly. But that said, there's opportunity for helping other fisheries out, not just the Santa Cruz Moss Landing, Monterey Fisheries. There's other places that could use this help. I think what we'd like to see is to get to a place where Oren and myself can be more like consultants and helping other communities set up things like this. It'd be one thing if we did it ourselves, but I think it'd be more valuable and a lot stronger if these other communities came to us for just help, essentially.

Female Speaker: Who do you mainly distribute to?

AL: Individuals like families. We don't do any restaurants. We just do local community members. Some students, not a ton of students, but mostly folks that live here and love seafood. Most of our members are from down in Monterey. Actually, I think it's like a sixty-forty split. We've got like sixty percent of our members down there, like forty percent of our members up here. But then the interesting thing is most of our fishermen are up here that we're working with because down in Moss Landing and Monterey, they're dominated by large fishing boats, like the guys going out and getting sardines and squid, these huge eighty-foot vessels. To get the more local fishermen...

MS: [coughs]

MS: Bless you.

AL: Yes. We've been working more with fishermen here in Santa Cruz.

MS: Have you considered selling to some of the local fish markets in town?

AL: We thought about it, absolutely. There's a logistical hurdle with that. The reason for that is we distribute on Tuesdays. Tuesdays are our day, right? That's our sort of the center of our universe [laughs]. It's like if we can get enough fish over the weekend, get it processed on Monday, and distribute it on Tuesday, we're happy. If we start distributing to restaurants and markets, they want their fish every day, right?

MS: You need a bigger market or a bigger thing to do this with before you want to do that?

AL: Right. I think that could happen in time. Like I said, we started in January, so we're really trying to get everything that we set up so far on a solid foundation before we kind of go that route. But definitely, I mean, I think the more that we can do to get seafood caught here, consumed here, the better off we'll be.

MS: What are you doing to get local fishermen on board with this program?

AL: You have some good questions there. [laughter]

Impressed. Yes. We give them a better price, and then we also do the marketing for them. If you go to our website, we advertise them, essentially. We let folks know who they are, how they're fishing. We do videos with them. So, I'll go around the boats with them, take a camera with me, and I'll make a little video sort of highlighting how they're fishing and give more personality, right? So now that if you were to get a piece of seafood, say, from Greg, who you'll talk to, if you were to get some sand dabs from him and you were to sit down and eat that, you would know where that came from and who caught it, as opposed to going to a grocery store, picking out a piece of fish from behind the glass window, sitting down and looking at that, and not knowing anything about that, right? So, all of a sudden, the seafood has a little bit more significance, has a little bit more meaning, and I think also is more enjoyable in that way, right? Now that you have all the information about that, you sit down and you eat that piece of fish, you start to realize that you're like, there's a whole community of folks that you're supporting in eating that seafood, right? It's no longer just something that tastes good. It's something that's also good for the ocean, giving the people all sorts of things. Another one. [laughter]

MS: Have you tried opening on a smaller market, maybe having a small little zone or maybe a couple of local grocery stores where you bring fish in on one day and just see if people start wanting to buy that and growing on that like margin of profit, I guess?

AL: Yes, absolutely. I mean, that's what we're trying to get at. The thing about restaurants and wholesalers, or retailers, rather, is they will operate on pretty low margins as well. So, they want really low pricing, and so it's really hard to argue to them that we've got a product that they should be charging more for.

MS: Well, what about a health food store where they kind of want local produce?

AL: Right. Yes.

MS: Something like that would be really good for you maybe. Have you thought about that?

AL: Yes, absolutely. Like New Leaf would be awesome. They would be perfect. So, talking to them and seeing if there's a way to get them once a week. Like I said, it's still the logistical thing, right? We operate on a Tuesday, like our whole week is based on a Tuesday.

MS: We'll just bring it in, maybe on a Tuesday, and having that for a small portion of time. Then if people start wanting more, bring in more and growing and expanding on that.

AL: Yes, absolutely. Yes. I mean, like I said, we're still figuring all this stuff out at the moment. I've never started a business before, Oren has never started one before, and we're really trying to figure out what works here for the community and what works for these fishermen as well. But there's been times when we don't get fish, too. That's another thing that's sort of expectations that you should always be able to get fish. We have to sort of break that habit and recognize that weather conditions sometimes don't allow guys to go out, or even if you go out, the fish aren't biting. So, we've had two weeks where we weren't able to bring in any fish. We had to let our members know that it really wasn't anything to get them. I think people are starting to understand that now. They will start to pay attention to the weather and realize that it's stormy out. These guys are probably not fishing, and they probably won't get fished. So, that's building a whole another level of connection there as well.

MS: How do you plan on getting maybe local families and stuff into this program, like advertisement in the local area?

AL: There's a magazine or publication that we've been working closely with called *Edible Monterey Bay*. That's all about local food. It's all about highlighting local food production, local wines, farmers operating out of here, restaurants that are supporting local foods. That had been our sort of main outlet because it's like the perfect demographic, right? We want to be working with folks who care about their food. Who want to know where it's coming from and they want to support the community. So, that's sort of our main way of getting it out there. We haven't done any of the mainstream, like any TV or radio or anything like that, but we've been just mostly relying on word of mouth to get the word out. You all have any questions over here? No?

FS: I have a question.

AL: Yes.

FS: So you have been out fishing, and what would be your best memory of being out on the ocean as a fisher fishing? [laughs]

AL: I know it's always amazing when you're out there to sort of – the new perspective that you get. We're so used to standing on shore and looking out over the ocean. It's another thing to sort of turn it around and be out on the ocean, looking out at the land. I think some of the best memories I have is being way out there and only seeing a glimpse of land, and it's pretty sort of humbling perspective because you realize you're really like at that point, sort of at the bottom of the food chain, or anything could happen out there and no one would ever know. It's like the Wild West. There's a lot of freedom out there. It's tough living that these guys do. I mean, I've been out there. I was out with one of our fishermen, Stan. It started out as a great day, but the seas came up and it just – the boat just starts tossing and turning, and we're still fishing. I mean, it's a lot of work. I think the best memories I have are being out there and having a moment. It's pretty busy, or I was working, but every once in a while you get a moment to sort of just reflect for a second and just kind of think about where you actually are and what's actually below you and what you're doing. It's a pretty amazing feeling. You throw on top of that an incredible sunrise or a sunset. It's pretty magical being out there.

MS: As being local to you, as the fisherman that you have in your own program, are you their main buyer, or do they have other buyers?

AL: They have other buyers as well. Yes. So, like I said, so these guys will be fishing. They try to fish as often as they can, as long as they have permits to fill, or quotas to fill, rather, and as long as they have the permits for the fish, they'll fish. If we only operate on a Tuesday, they'll fish probably like Friday, Saturday, Sunday for us. Then those other days, they'll fish for other folks. That seafood typically gets bought up by somebody else and then sent to San Francisco. Processed over there and sent to, who knows, where. I mean, I think the ideal situation would be to get fishermen who are exclusively selling to us and we're distributing exclusively to the community. If we could get to a point where that's possible, I think we'll have a pretty solid program. But it's a process. It's a slow process. Incremental process to get these guys on board, because a lot of these fishermen, they have their sort of set routine, right?

MS: Yes.

AL: If they can just come to a dock and just know who they're selling to and not have to worry about it anymore, then they're usually pretty happy. But for us to come in and say, "Well, here's a better sort of system that we're working on, here's a system where you should hopefully make more money," you get more support from local folks. People know who you are now, that maybe people will recognize you as a fisherman who catches their fish all around town or whatever. You can start to see that people actually start to care about the fishermen as well. Because another thing is when these two groups aren't connecting, they start to feel like no one's really paying attention to them or caring about what they're doing. There's a lot of sort of sense of victimization because there's always increased regulations on these guys. They don't necessarily feel like they're getting very much support at all. So, if we can create a system where we say, "Well, we got a bunch of folks that eat your fish. If you were to lose your job, they'd be very unhappy," and they want to help you do the right thing and they want to help you make a living, and they want to help you support your family. Simple things.

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