

INTRODUCTION

There has been a general increase in the use of lobsters in the UK over the last few years for several reasons. There has been a general increase in usage of all fish and shellfish products as part of the healthy eating trend. The benefits of using lobsters in your diet will be dealt with a later speaker.

Lobster prices have not risen as rapidly as some other prime fish over the last few years and, with the growing acceptance of the Canadian product, the previously experienced winter peak prices do not occur. This encourages the catering industry to use lobsters on restaurant menus and for catering and banquet events.

Traditionally, the European lobster has been exported to the Continent and during the times when lobsters were scarce the prices would double due to demand from these markets which were prepared to pay the high prices. This still happens but the UK market is satisfied by imports from Canada.

Initially there was resistance from chefs to the Canadian lobster, firstly because it was something new and secondly because they were cooked as if they were European lobsters. As they have a thinner shell than their European cousins, overcooking causes the meat to toughen and results in a loss of flavour. It was also said that the flavour of the Canadian lobster was inferior to the of the European lobster, but with correct cooking procedures the flavour differences are minimal and only detectable by the true gourmet.

Maine lobsters are also imported from the USA but it is generally accepted that the meat texture and content is inferior to the Canadian product. The average sizes of the Maine lobster also tends to be small with the popular larger sizes being more expensive.

Until five years ago we used to work on the general rule of thumb that if Canadian lobsters were 50 pence per pound cheaper, then all of our clients would switch from the European lobster. This generally meant that sales of Canadian lobsters were limited to the period from November until April when UK fishing was poor or non-existent.

Nowadays, most Restaurant, Hotel and catering outlets will use Canadian lobsters as their first choice.