

# TASTE

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DAILY ECHO

## Fishy fight

Dermot O' Leary is the latest celebrity to add his support to the Fish Fight campaign. Here he explains why he thinks we all should be doing the same.

**W**HEN we heard about the Fish Fight campaign at Fishy Fishy, we were really keen to support it.

Hugh, Gordon and Jamie are doing a fantastic job of getting the nation interested in fish and in calling everyone to support our fishermen, stop discard, encourage sustainability and to raise awareness of what's really going on out there.

I have added my endorsement to the online campaign (at [www.fishfight.net](http://www.fishfight.net)) and we are supporting it at both our restaurants (Fishy Fishy in Brighton and Poole). I am encouraging everyone to join and support the bid to change the law about how fishermen are allowed to fish.

Since the campaign started a matter of weeks ago, more than 650,000 people have pledged their support by joining the online petition – a great indication that we are learning more about what's happening at sea and care enough to want to protect our fish. Through educating us about the great work our fishermen do, and sadly some of the crimes against fish that are being committed, Fish Fight campaigners are hoping to garner sufficient momentum to be able to

help push through changes in the law, helping to protect the many fishing communities working responsibly and, of course, our fish supplies.

One of the frustrations I have about what is going on is that the population is expanding and predictions state that we won't have enough food to feed the world in 2050.

Yet we are taking fish from the sea and being forced to throw it back over because the law states that once fishermen have reached their fishing quota, they have to throw away any additional catch.

It simply does not make sense to throw away perfectly edible fish. I have met fishermen who have had to throw cod back into the sea, only for it to be caught further down the ocean by their friend.

No doubt future generations will look back on what we're doing now and think it's crazy.

As someone pointed out on TV last week, if a farmer slaughtered 100 lambs and could only keep 50, throwing the other 50 by the roadside, the country would be up in arms. The fact that fishermen HAVE to throw their fish back into the sea is the same principal. However, because it's one

that's unseen, buried in the sea, until now it has gone unnoticed.

Hugh and the team have also suggested solutions; instead of forcing fishermen to discard, limit their number of fishing days at sea, allowing them to land all their catch but with restrictions to protect stocks – for example, fishing for a low quota fish like cod is permitted on fewer days than for huss with no quota. To me, this seems like the only true way to do it, otherwise there will be no cod left on our shelves.

**T**his, together with moving away from techniques like beam trawling (whereby nets dragged along the seabed bring everything up with them), will surely help.

Icelandic and New Zealand fisheries are duty bound to conserve the parts of the sea they fish in and it seems to work.

Whatever happens, change is necessary. To do this well and to make it work, the hard working fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on fishing responsibly and effectively, need to be heard.

No fisherman I have ever met wants the sea to be empty of fish. They are often from families of fishermen going back for generations and have an inherent respect for the ocean and its fruits, wanting their future generations to continue to catch fish.

It is within their interests to conserve fish supplies to maintain the careers they enjoy.

I hope that this campaign will encourage us all to think about the issues that endanger our future fish supplies and will bring new, great tasting fish like pollack to the forefront.

I also hope it continues to emphasise that we can all take responsibility and do our bit to help.

Restaurants must take sustainability seriously and choose to be responsible about how they work with suppliers. Individually we can make different choices when we shop or eat out.

Together, hopefully we can encourage change on a bigger level, and support the Fish Fight's aim to change EU law.



● Dermot with his restaurant co-owners, and above right, Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall

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