



### **Study by NYC teens finds fishy labeling of seafood**

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570 words

22 August 2008

04:18

[Associated Press Newswires](#)

English

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NEW YORK (AP) - Some city restaurants and markets are pulling a bait-and-switch when it comes to labeling seafood, according to a study by two teenagers who used DNA barcode technology to identify the catch of the day.

The study, which will appear in the September issue of the trade publication *Pacific Fishing*, found that 14 of 56 samples the teens collected were incorrectly labeled as higher-priced fish.

One sample labeled "white tuna" at a sushi restaurant turned out to be tilapia, which is commonly raised on fish farms and sells for a fraction of the price of tuna, according to the study.

"I was very surprised," said Kate Stoeckle, 18, who coauthored the study with her friend Louisa Strauss, 17. "People want to know what they're eating. And they want to get their money's worth."

Several studies have found that fish sold in the U.S. is often mislabeled.

A 2004 study published in the journal *Nature* found that 77 percent of the fish sold as red snapper was actually something else. Consumer Reports tested 23 supposedly wild salmon fillets in 2005 and 2006 and found that 13 were farm-raised.

"We've had catfish labeled as grouper," said Mark Paterni, assistant director of National Marine Fisheries Service's Office for Law Enforcement. "Our office has been involved in the investigation of thousands of pounds of mislabeled imported fish."

Stoeckle and Strauss got the idea of using DNA barcode technology from Stoeckle's father, Dr. Mark Stoeckle, a bird barcoding expert and adjunct faculty member at Rockefeller University.

DNA barcoding uses a genetic marker in an organism's DNA to identify it as belonging to a particular species.

The teens, who graduated from Trinity School in Manhattan and are both headed to Johns Hopkins University in the fall, collected 60 fish samples and sent them to be analyzed at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, which maintains a library of DNA barcodes. Four of the samples were unidentifiable.

The study illustrates how difficult it is to police seafood labeling. Alison Barratt, a spokeswoman for the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which monitors which seafood species are sustainably fished or farmed, said it is hard to trace the chain of custody from fisherman to consumer.

"Because eighty percent of the seafood that we eat in this country is imported, it's hard to tell," she said.

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