

Spotlight On:

Dai Fukasaku | Owner and Chef

Fukasaku, Est. 2013

Life Story

Dai Fukasaku was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan. After leaving Tokyo, Dai lived in 13 different towns and cities throughout the United States and Canada before settling in Prince Rupert, B.C. He was drawn to Prince Rupert for its friendly and generous people, beautiful nature and the fresh, local seafood. Dai became interested in local, sustainable seafood upon reading a report from David Suzuki highlighting the negative impacts of imported seafood. He realized that many sushi restaurants rely on imported products and became concerned that western sushi is losing its traditional Japanese roots by not highlighting the flavour of the fish itself. This is when Dai decided to open a sushi restaurant of his own.

Fukasaku, located in Prince Rupert, B.C., is dedicated to serving only sustainable and locally-caught seafood and is 100% Ocean Wise certified by the Vancouver Aquarium's Ocean Wise program.

What was the motivation behind starting your own business?

There's so much wonderful seafood caught off the northwest coast, and I wanted to bring this seafood to the local community.

Who are your mentors?

Robert Clark from The Fish Counter in Vancouver and Ned Bell from the Ocean Wise program have been great friends and sources of inspiration for me, and I thank them for what they've done for sustainable seafood.

What do you see as your greatest accomplishment to date?

My five-year restaurant anniversary felt great, and we are still growing. I'm happy to see that people are starting to pay more attention to local and sustainable food choices when they are dining.

Why did you decide to start your business in B.C?

I fell in love with B.C. seafood, and felt that someone really needed to promote it locally. I wanted to set an example for what chefs can do with sustainable seafood from the northwest coast.

What challenges did you face as an immigrant entrepreneur and how did you overcome them?

Getting initial financing from local banks or credits unions was tough. Luckily, with the help of an advisor from Self Employment Services through the Employment Program of BC, I had a really well written business plan and managed to secure financing. I struggled a bit with my English, but I always received help from those around me.

Why is it important for you to focus on local and sustainable food?

Local, sustainable seafood has better nutritional value and lower environmental impacts. By consuming and appreciating sustainable seafood, we can pass our seafood on to generations to come.

What are some challenges of operating a sustainable and locally sourced restaurant?

Even during peak fishing season, it's sometimes hard to source seafood locally because our fisheries are busy with big loads destined for international markets, while I only want a tiny share. I've learned that I have to get it while it's here, before it's sent abroad. This requires a lot of planning.

What has been your biggest lesson learned about being your own boss?

You have to work very hard, and you can't expect your staff to put in as much as you do.

What advice would you give a newcomer to B.C. who is interested in starting their own business?

A really good business plan and sales projections are a must. Make sure you have some unique features that separate you from other businesses and seek help from the local community.

How do you plan to grow your business in the coming years?

I will continue to travel so that I can collaborate with and learn from other chefs. I share these experiences on social media, and my customers appreciate that I am continuously learning while promoting sustainable B.C. seafood.

What is a little-known fact about you?

I have a degree in music with a concentration in voice, but no formal culinary or business training. I'm completely self-taught!

Where is your favourite B.C. destination?

When I'm away from work, I love to enjoy quiet moments in nature. Haida Gwaii and Denny Island are two places that I need to revisit soon.

The Bottom Line:

- Fukasaku employs six staff.
- Dai has plans to open a community marketplace to connect local fishers to local consumers.