



NEWS RELEASE
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Media Contact
Glenda Beasley
512-750-5199
media@seadconsulting.com

Headline: Is Your 'Gulf' Shrimp Actually Farm-Raised Overseas?

Subhead: *From grocery stores to restaurants to festivals, our southern coast's most popular wild seafood has been quietly replaced by a foreign substitute.*

Think you love Gulf shrimp? It's possible you've never even tasted it.

Last Labor Day weekend, sample genetic testing at the [Louisiana Shrimp & Petroleum Festival](#) in Morgan City, Louisiana — where you'd naturally think "Gulf" shrimp was being sold and promoted in a town built on shrimping — revealed that only one of five vendors (Woodreaux's Cajun Cuisine) was actually serving the real deal. Unaware festival goers never thought to question the source as they consumed imported, farm-raised shrimp right next to the Gulf of Mexico.

Shrimp switching is likely happening at your favorite seafood eatery or grocery store, too, despite labeling and signage that may mislead you, just as it did those festival goers.

Decades ago, ordering a restaurant platter or fish-market pound of Gulf shrimp meant a product "fresh off the boat" in ports from Texas to Florida. Still surrounded today by imagery of boats and nets as they enjoy supposedly fresh local fare, consumers are unaware of a "bait-and-switch" tactic utilizing deceptive labeling practices and imagery to charge premium prices for an inferior foreign product, one that now threatens our domestic shrimping industry.

Shockingly, around 90 percent of all shrimp sold in the U.S. today [is farm-raised and imported](#). India and Ecuador flooded the American market with more shrimp in the first four months of 2024 than the total U.S. annual production of the previous year.

Not surprisingly, rampant "shrimp dumping" — the practice of selling below the cost of production — is devastating to local shrimpers. Retailer freezers are already full of the cheap product as the season begins, causing severe economic losses along the coast as U.S. boats sit idle.

Doug Olander, a commercial shrimp fisherman from Port St. Mary, Louisiana, whose boats have mostly remained docked for two years, says the supply chain needs the transparency that widespread testing provides.

"This type of fraud should be a crime," Olander says. "When you buy 'Gulf' shrimp, you think you're supporting American fishermen. Instead, these lies are killing our businesses. Most of our distributors are opting for this cheaper imported shrimp. This has got to stop."

In 2023, the Southern Shrimp Alliance raised the problem's profile in their report, [A Crisis of Our Own Making](#). In response, new laws are being introduced. A federal, bipartisan [Save Our Shrimpers Act](#) has been proposed to curb international funding for foreign shrimp-related activities. Additionally, Alabama will enact [new regulations in October 2024](#) and Louisiana is making sweeping changes to their existing [laws starting January 2025](#) to make it illegal for restaurants and retailers to falsely promote imported shrimp as wild-caught, with steep fines for violators.

Chef Drake Leonards of Houston's Eunice Restaurant says when it comes to shrimp, it's not all about price, so he goes the extra mile to source only genuine Gulf shrimp from trusted suppliers.

"There's a world of difference between wild-caught Gulf shrimp and farm-raised varieties," Leonards says. "The taste of the sea is integral to our dishes, and we're committed to delivering that authenticity to our customers."

The deception goes beyond restaurateurs perhaps unknowingly purchasing imported shrimp. Some establishments intentionally mislead diners by using menu and dining room imagery to strongly imply they're serving shrimp harvested at sea. Learn how to identify the real deal [here](#).

Most people believe they can tell the difference between farm-raised shrimp and Gulf wild-caught shrimp. The difference can be seen more so in raw brown shell-on shrimp vs. white shell-on shrimp. However, once cooked and peeled the difference is hard to tell.

The impact of imported farm-raised shrimp extends beyond consumer deception. The environmental toll of this industry shift is staggering, as aquaculture operations in China, India, Indonesia, Ecuador and Vietnam are causing coastal wetland destruction, high carbon footprints (due to elongated supply chains) and even documented cases of slave [labor](#).

Innovative monitoring that's quick and affordable — like the testing at the Louisiana festival — can help bring the Gulf shrimp industry back to life on tables across the country. Houston-based SeaD Consulting has developed a Rapid ID Genetics High-accuracy Test ([RIGHT](#)) that can determine the species of shrimp within two hours (previously four days).

"This technology revolutionizes the industry, enabling real-time action against fraudulent practices," says Dave Williams, commercial fishery scientist and SeaD Consulting founder. "The test is fast, inexpensive and accurate." He adds, "If a restaurateur or retailer chooses to sell farm-raised imported shrimp instead of local-caught, they simply need to correctly inform their customers."

Williams is hoping that governmental agencies, seafood processors, retailers and restaurants will use this new testing as an economical method for ensuring that customers are getting what they think they're paying for.

Call to Action: Consumers should ask about the origin of their shrimp, and demand transparency through testing by restaurants and suppliers. Every time you [choose Gulf-caught shrimp](#), you're not just savoring a fresher, more flavorful product — you're supporting American coastal communities.

About SeaD Consulting

SeaD (Seafood Development) Consulting works with diverse stakeholders — seafood producers, academia, governmental agencies, and environmental organizations — to foster innovation and sustainability throughout the sector, bridging commercial fishery science with testing and processing technologies to combat seafood mislabeling and substitution fraud.

For more information, please visit www.seadconsulting.com or contact us at sead@seadconsulting.com. #SeaDConsulting

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