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Consumers naturally have an aversion to 'artificial' when it comes to food, but surimi resonates more positively. Photo: IntraFish

# Is it time to toss out 'imitation crab'? Surimi may fare better in the US market being called by its true name, survey shows

While 76% percent of consumers surveyed have a "good" opinion regarding the term surimi seafood, just 58 percent share that opinion for product identified as "imitation crab."

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By [John Fiorillo](#)

If you announce to your American dinner guests that the crab cakes being served are made from surimi seafood you are undoubtedly going to get a more positive response than if you tell them the dish is made using imitation crab.

It might seem obvious, but there is data to support this.



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An online survey of US consumers done by market research firm Ketchum for the Genuine Alaska Pollock Producers (GAPP) association found that while US consumers are overwhelmingly more familiar with the term imitation crab, their opinion of the words surimi seafood is significantly higher than that of imitation crab.

Seventy-six percent of consumers surveyed have a "good" opinion regarding the term surimi seafood, but just 58 percent share that opinion for product identified as imitation crab.

"There is massive confusion as to surimi versus imitation crab meat," Mary Elizabeth Germaine, global head of analytics at Ketchum, told GAPP conference attendees in Seattle on Oct. 17.

**expected to take heavy hit**

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While in other high-volume surimi markets such as France and Japan the seafood nature of the product is the focus, in the US the product was introduced as a cheap alternative to crab or lobster, and the "imitation" name has stuck.


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Not surprisingly, the perceived artificial nature of the product turns off a large segment of shoppers, and many are unaware the product is even made from fish.

The survey's results reinforce the frustration brought on by a decades-long battle to make over the image of what the Alaska pollock sector argues is one of the most sustainable, convenient protein options in the market today.


But there is a bright side, said Germaine.

There is a higher product equity with the surimi name than you get with imitation crab meat, she said, and this is something to build on.

There is definitely a huge opportunity to educate people on what the product is and how they can fit it into their lifestyle,


said Germaine.

"Give them that recipe inspiration, and almost do like a branding campaign specifically to build awareness of surimi," she said.



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