

# Prized “Gaelic Abalone” Launched into UK Luxury Catering Market by Irish Shellfish Producers

Premium Japanese Abalone now available in commercial quantities from Ireland

Rossaveal, Co. Galway, and Castletownbere, Co. Cork – 09/11/2009 –

Entrepreneurial Irish shellfish producers **Connemara Abalone Ltd.** and **Tower Aqua Ltd.** announced today the availability of the rare and much-prized Japanese abalone species (*haliotis discus hannai*, commonly known as “ezo”), for sale to the UK and Irish markets.

The launch of this premium abalone species on the UK market was accompanied by an **Abalone Master-class** with **award-winning Irish chef Tim O’Sullivan** of the renowned **Renvyle House Hotel, Connemara, Co. Galway**.

Held at **Divertimenti’s Cookery School** in London’s West End, Maureen Williams, managing director of Divertimenti said, “Consistently on the cutting edge of cooking, *Divertimenti* are delighted to provide Gaelic abalone producers with the perfect setting for their launch into the London seafood scene, and I look forward to seeing their abalone used in our own cookery school”.

Tim O’Sullivan introduced the subtle charms of ezo abalone to a gathering of top caterers and chefs from some of London’s best-known hotels and restaurants, all eager to learn more about this exotic product and the many ways of preparing and presenting it.

“It’s a wonderful shellfish that I have worked with in the past”, said Tim. “I love cooking with it; the taste is delicate, subtle, and very sophisticated.

“While abalone is clearly a shellfish and looks a little like a large scallop when out of its shell, it has its own unique texture and flavour.

“There is an absolute purity about them which is as rare in seafood as the species itself. Eating them is a rare pleasure too as they are as soft to cut through as the purest of Irish butter.

“I can genuinely say I have never tasted another shellfish which is anything like as delicate a sensation as eating these Gaelic abalone. I am happy to recommend them to the finest restaurants and know how much their diners will savour this new taste”

Sponsored by **Bord Iascaigh Mhara** (the Irish Sea Fisheries Board), the event was hosted by the much-respected **British Hospitality Association**, representing Britain’s best hotels, restaurants and caterers.

“Abalone are a new culinary opportunity for British caterers and chefs, since they are not produced in the U.K. or any other European country,” says **Bob Cotton, BHA chief executive**. “We think it will interest many chefs who are looking for something new to put on the menu.”

Abalone are a highly-prized shellfish delicacy, especially now that they have become scarce in most countries around the world where they used to be plentiful. Having been introduced to Ireland about 25 years ago, Irish aquaculture has finally succeeded in raising enough of these “truffles of the sea” to offer them for sale on the U.K. and Irish markets.

Irish abalone are born and reared in state-of-the-art aquaculture farms on the lush coast of the Beara peninsula in Co. Cork, and on the austere rocky shore of Co. Galway where the Atlantic Ocean meets Galway Bay. They are fed entirely on locally-harvested seaweed, with none of the artificial substitutes or additives fed to farmed species in other countries. They are kept in almost decadent luxury (for abalone), in pristine waters that are constantly monitored, filtered and cleaned, to ensure the production of finest quality abalone and a treat for the discerning palate.

As evidenced by their enthusiasm for eating, growing, and reproducing, they are as happy as, well, clams – only much more substantial, and much tastier. In fact, abalone are the most efficient way known to nature of converting red algae to white protein. Moreover, they contain zero fat and are excellent sources of Omega\_3.

Abalone are normally shipped live in cool insulated boxes by overnight courier. You can prepare abalone for eating by first “shucking” the animal from its shell, briefly tenderizing to relax the muscle, and then either steaming, boiling, frying, or marinating it.

“After many years of research and development, we are delighted to have reached the stage where commercial volumes of the highest-quality abalone can be produced on a regular and long-term basis”, said **Michael O’Neill, managing director of Tower Aqua**. “The west and southwest coast of Ireland is the perfect environment for the production of such a high value shellfish, with large supplies of sustainably harvested kelp providing one of the best abalone food resources in the world. All these attributes combine to produce a high-quality shellfish which is second to none as regards flavour and texture.”

“This is a landmark occasion for us and I am really happy to partner with Michael as we formally launch our abalone on the UK and Irish market today”, said **Cindy O’Brien, managing director of Connemara Abalone**. “In California, where I grew up, abalone are considered the ultimate seafood delicacy. Now we are giving seafood lovers in the UK the opportunity to discover what the fuss is all about, and I am sure they will appreciate the special appeal of our abalone once they try it for themselves.”

For more information, see [www.abalone.ie](http://www.abalone.ie), or [www.toweraqua.com](http://www.toweraqua.com).