

“If Oceans Could Speak”

Season 2, Episode 8 Transcript [ENG]

Stefano Pedone and chef Mattia Borroni: Sustainable Food & Taste

[00:00:00] **Mattia:** So, if we experience the sea, we go out to sea, we are able to breathe in this energy and then when we come back to land, we continue to communicate this energy in our dishes or in what we eat, or even in our daily lives.

[00:00:15] **Anna:** Welcome to this episode of If Oceans Could Speak. I am Anna, and with this podcast I would like to take you on a journey to discover the most inspiring and often unheard stories about the ocean, told directly by our guests. By sharing these conversations with you, we hope to inspire and enthuse you, but we would also like to lead you to reflect on your own personal relationship with the ocean.

In this second season of IOCS, we will be looking at perspectives from the Mediterranean Sea, and today in particular we are delighted to introduce two fantastic guests with whom we will be discussing sustainable food and flavours from the Mediterranean Sea. We have with us today Stefano Pedone and chef Mattia Borroni. Stefano is a project officer at Worldrise, where he coordinates the SEAstainable project on sustainable fishing and seafood consumption. Worldrise is a non-profit organisation founded by young professionals related to marine science who dedicate their activities to young people. Worldrise aims to protect and enhance the marine environment through training and awareness-raising projects. Mattia, on the other hand, discovered his passion for cooking at the age of 11. Today he is a talented young chef and works at Alexander, a historic cinema in the heart of Ravenna that was converted into a restaurant in 2002. Passion, improvisation and common sense are important qualities that accompany him in the kitchen. Mattia is a member of Worldrise's Merair project, coordinated by Stefano.

Hello to you both and welcome to this episode.

[00:01:50] **Mattia:** Hello!

[00:01:51] **Stefano:** Hello!

[00:01:52] **Mattia:** Thank you for the invitation.

[00:01:53] **Stefano:** Thank you very much.

[00:01:54] **Anna:** So I would start with a few questions to introduce your story in the first person. Starting with Stefano, Stefano what is the story that ties you to the Mediterranean Sea, and what led you to want to protect the Mediterranean Sea and therefore to dedicate yourself to environmental protection? We know very well that it is not always an easy task.

[00:02:15] **Stefano:** My history that ties me to the Mediterranean is quite ancestral, so to speak, for the simple fact that, being born in Liguria, I have always been in touch with the Mediterranean Sea. Even as a child, my sensations that bring me back [to the sea], a bit like my Proust's madeleine, is the smell of the sea, the saltiness, the salt on my skin. So the sea has always been a part of me.

Then I have to admit that what allowed me to grow professionally, what set me on my path right away was also my curiosity, which my parents, luckily, have always supported. Having a geologist father, he immediately understood what it meant when he saw a son so curious about the natural world. So, they always supported me in nurturing this continuous curiosity of mine, which on the one hand also meant – unfortunately for them – paying a monthly fee with the Genoa Aquarium. Since I was a child, every month I would ask to go and visit it, so it was a not inconsiderable expense, more than the university fee. Then, of course, I decided from an early age that I would become a marine biologist. But you have to admit the fact that, although I had pursued this direction of mine, this passion of mine, in a very linear way, then when you find yourself towards the end of university, not really knowing what path to take, I had not thought at all about the path of associationism, that is, the third sector of non-profit organisations. I was thinking a bit like everyone else about dedicating myself to the world of university research. Then I actually met Mariasole Bianco, who is the founder of Worldrise, I met her by chance in a course on naturalistic communication, and at the end of this course, which was very educational and very interesting, she presented Worldrise, which at the time was still very young

as an association, and from there I decided that I would do that, that I would enter this world.

[00:04:13] **Anna:** OK Great, so we can say that you started following Worldrise almost from the very beginning. Now I would say let's ask Mattia to tell us a bit about your relationship with the sea: do you have a particular memory, or an experience related to the Mediterranean Sea that you could share with us and that has marked your path and determined your passion?

[00:04:39] **Mattia:** Let's say that for me the passion for the sea came first, and then the passion for cooking came later, also because I was born and raised at sea. In fact it is still one of the things that gives me the most excitement, because my passion outside of cooking, which is my job, is scuba diving, sailing... I own a sailboat; therefore, I am the owner of a sailboat. So the fact that I moved from Milan to a city by the sea... that means a lot. I have my grandparents on my mother's side who are of Marche origin. We have a house on the Conero Riviera and this strong influence of the sea has always been present in my life, ever since I was even a little boy. Every year I couldn't wait to get to the Conero coast to go diving. And my big dream was to own a boat. Now, as I grew up, I have bought a sailboat and fulfilled my maritime dream.

This also led me to be very curious, just about the level of seafood we have in our area or in our culinary world in general. And it was that springboard that gave me the strength and continuity to try to find ways to improve more and more, and to use more and more products that are a bit more hidden, in the sense that people use them a bit less. Because unfortunately, cuisine is becoming very, let's say a one-track road, where people always use those four or five products and the market then obviously, since it has to play by the rules of the game a bit, only supplies those four or five products. And so it becomes a bit more difficult, a challenge really, to try and find products that are a bit more forgotten, a bit more unusual, which, in the end, are not unusual, because if we go back to twenty years, thirty years or fifty years ago, they were products that we would use all the time in our daily life, but unfortunately now they have been very much forgotten. My curiosity has led me every time to improve myself more and more, and improving myself has also led me in my working life to have gratifications at the national or even territorial level. So this is a great satisfaction. All this, I owe to the sea, to my curiosity to know what is above the sea, but most importantly, what is under the sea. I returned yesterday after a dive, because I have this very need to touch, to fully immerse myself in the sea.

And by the way, this very thing here of being physically connected to the sea makes me realise more and more every year how important it really is - that's why I also supported this project with them [Worldrise] - just how important it is to try to enhance it, to try above all to respect it.

Because when you go diving in the same spot all the time you realise, year after year how much there is this big change. Because people see it out of the water, because it's in everyone's eyes, so maybe pollution and deforestation and stuff like that. But they don't realise that underwater it's the same, only a few people see that. So, this thing here makes me be a bit more careful even in the choice of raw materials.

[00:07:43] **Anna:** That is very true, thank you. Then especially when we talk about climate change, we often tend to think of a whole series of phenomena that are happening under our eyes, so above the surface of the sea. And instead, unfortunately there are so many problems, and so many changes happening in the marine ecosystems. I wanted to ask you, if you say that the love for the sea came first and then the love for cooking, then what sparked it off? And what made you say “Ok, I want to pursue this career and in my life I want to be a chef.”?

[00:08:17] **Mattia:** I always say that my passion for cooking was born a bit of a necessity, in the sense that I am not a son of art - which in this world is a bit difficult because usually a lot of people become passionate about cooking or become cooks because maybe they have parents who have passed on a love or have very strong traditions. But that's not the case for me. I have always loved manual things. So ever since I was little, I was doing handicrafts with wood, doing everything that involved my manual creativity. And in the kitchen I found myself in this world. I started very early on, precisely because I wanted to see if it was my path. A lot of young people today do hospitality school because they think it's a school that doesn't require you to have your own skills. But I attended hospitality school precisely because I was aware that I wanted to do that school, and not because I had no idea what to do. So before I went to hospitality school, I worked for some time in a restaurant of a friend of mine - by the way, a very good one, and I have to thank him for putting me in the haute cuisine business - to see if it was actually what I wanted to do. And from there I decided to go to hospitality school, working while I went to school. This allowed me to, let's say, fast forward, because I started working very early, I started being a chef very early. Now I am 31 years old, I have been working for 15 to 16 years. I say I'm

almost already fed up - no, I'm joking. But it has given me the opportunity to experience a lot more than other people who maybe started working at twenty, twenty-two.

In our work knowledge is very important, and above all experience, and therefore the more years of experience you have, the more sensitivity you have in dealing with raw materials or even just knowing what the customers' needs are. You are in contact with a lot of people on a daily basis, so you also have to have that sensitivity to be able to understand what a customer wants, how you can propose it to them, never to risk too much, because in our world of work, then at base, our job is to sell a product to someone. If there is no one, it's a hobby and no longer a job. So the more you go on, the more experience you have from that point of view there. And also the more products then you can handle. So, as we were saying before, if products that are maybe a bit more unusual, then people find it hard to use them because maybe they need a little bit more care, maybe more processing, maybe more knowledge to be able to use some products that can be called poor fish or poor products. And maybe they resort to products that are easier, the cooking is much easier. I guess, I take the simple example of tuna: why is yellowfin tuna consumed in all the restaurants of the world? Because it is not too expensive, it is very easy to cook, it is good, everyone likes it. Then I see it differently, to use a crab, to use a “tracina”, or even just an anchovy or “sarda”: there is a fishbone, it has a stronger taste, so people tend to like it a little less... You have to make an effort to find the best way to use it and try to cook it properly. A lot of people are maybe a bit lazy, or maybe they just lack the experience to be able to use a product in the best way.

[00:11:33] **Anna:** So, on the one hand, you still need to have the passion and the willingness to experiment with different products, but on the other hand you also need a lot of practice in order to be able to devote yourself to preparations that are a bit more complex, but which allow the consumption of a product that is much more sustainable, that is much less impactful than more commercialised fish products. Why do you think it is important to talk about the sustainability of seafood products, especially when we turn to Mediterranean cuisine?

[00:12:07] **Mattia:** So, I think it is important to have the raw material, to look for it to be ethical, for two reasons, let's be honest. Firstly, for a more personal, slightly more selfish reason: for our tradition. That is, our maritime tradition used products that we don't use today. As I was saying before, swordfish tuna that arrives from the other side of the world or frozen cuttlefish and squid

(which we find in ninety-nine percent of the places on the Riviera), is not tradition. So, since we are a people, especially we Romagna people, very attached to our tradition, when we talk about tradition we must also talk about traditional fish, fish that grows here, the fish that our grandparents actually used to make fried fish. Otherwise, that is just business and does not go hand in hand with tradition. The use of poor fish gives you the possibility of, first of all, avoiding the intensive fishing of other types of fish that may suffer when they are caught, but not suffer in terms of animal suffering, but precisely in the sense that if we catch, I'll give you a silly example, if we catch all the sea bass in the Mediterranean, it goes without saying that after a while there is no sea bass left. So if, instead of catching them all, we catch, I don't know, a certain portion of those, and then we dedicate ourselves to perhaps catching other fish that are more sustainable, both from the point of view of the type of fishing - Stefano will do better in specifying these things - and above all to diversifying what we find on the market. And right now, restaurant workers like myself are suffering from a lack of catch. Because the market is unfortunately only going in one direction. I want to make a menu, I struggle to find fresh raw material that comes from our sea. But why? One, because there is little of it; but, secondly, because the market is not asking for it. If nobody asks for, say, the weever fish, they don't even catch it; if they do catch it, they throw it back into the water as it is, because for them it is a fish that has no market. If, on the other hand, people started asking for a *tracina*, or asking for *zanchetti*, they would have a market, and this market would perhaps bring the price of sea bass or *ombrine* down a little, and perhaps they would have a slightly bigger market with the other type of fish called poor fish.

Especially in the fishing techniques. Some fish maybe need to have fishing techniques that are a bit more invasive and others a bit less invasive. As we did when we did the show cooking in Cervia: we used, for example, *rapane* or murex, which are products that are part of our tradition, abandoned because they are a bit tricky to clean, to tell the truth, the blue crab, which is a crab that is not ours, but is becoming a traditional product. Fishermen no longer find the *acquadella*, the mullet, for example, but they find a lot of blue crabs. So that is also becoming a traditional product. We have to adapt a little bit to climate change, to changes, even in our tradition, and above all try to use products that come from our sea or from our market, because at least in this way we also stimulate our economy a little bit.

[00:15:10] **Anna:** So, that is why it is so important in the Mediterranean to talk about sustainable fish products, i.e. both from the point of view of revaluing some products that are already part of the tradition but are somewhat forgotten, precisely the so-called poor fish, but also to focus on the variety that characterises our Mediterranean Sea...

[00:15:31] **Mattia:** Especially on seasonality. Also because we are very careful about seasonality, for example, of fruit and vegetables. But no one would ever dream, in January or even earlier in December, of eating strawberries because everyone would tell you that you're crazy. But then in January people ask for mussels, and there are no mussels in January. It is counterproductive: you go and get a product that is not good, a product that maybe comes from the other side of the world, because you absolutely have to include mussels in your menu. And unfortunately, seasonality fish-wise is much less well known than seasonality can be for fruit and vegetables, because a good marketing job has been done precisely on the seasonality issue [of fruits and vegetables] and on fish maybe a little less. So people don't know which is the period of the cuttlefish, which is the period of the mussel, which is the period of the oily fish. That is a bit disappointing.

[00:16:20] **Anna:** OK, perfect, so it is very important to make the public more aware of the importance of seasonality, even in this sector. And if I'm not mistaken, Worldrise also works on this public awareness, right, Stefano? I wanted to ask you the same question, i.e. why is it so important to talk about sustainability, also, of course, from your point of view?

[00:16:43] **Stefano:** And I agree with everything Mattia said, precisely because our work, and with our SEAstainable project, is precisely related to the fact that we are noticing, at least we are noticing the fact that consumers who are the general public have precisely this lack of information, ignorance, but because there is little communication about it, precisely about what is the world of fishing and the world of fish products.

People are accustomed, but also just as a matter of convenience of the fruition of the product, if only because of the constant presence on TV of agriculture, animal husbandry, and certain types of products - as Mattia said, the seasonality of fruit, the seasonality of vegetables -, even if only from the point of view of the consumption of farmed animals. Farmed animals can be counted on the fingers of one hand: the pig, the cow, the chicken, the sheep. Whereas fishing is

a whole other world. Fishing, even though it is always connected from a ministerial point of view, 'Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries', fishing is a whole other universe. Fishing, to begin with, is a world that is not based on growing creatures. With very few exceptions, we do not breed most of the fish that we catch. So what fishing is still a last, let's say, refers back to what hunting was. You do not reap what you have sown, you reap what you can find on the spot. And it is very difficult if there is no ethics behind what fishermen do, or monitoring and management, you risk then depleting the sea, in finding yourself, as Mattia was saying, catching tons of fish, because you find a lot, but then there is no more in the future.

There is also a lot of ignorance about the fact that the Mediterranean is actually thought to be an enormous wealth. In other words, in the Mediterranean we have a quantity of species that can be consumed, which can act as a sort of counterbalance to other more commonly consumed species that are perhaps not in season: if I cannot find one species, I can use another. In the Mediterranean this is feasible because we have dozens and dozens of species; It's just, because of what Mattia was saying, a little bit of consumer laziness, but then there is also the habit, the laziness of chefs and restaurateurs, therefore creating this cycle of a dog biting its own tail because in the end, menus always feature the usual four species, one of which is tuna from the Atlantic Ocean, Patagonian frozen squid, in other words, all products that in any case has nothing to do with what is a product of the territory. After all, it is a paradox considering the fact that in Italy we are so tied to this territoriality. I mean, there's always this picture of the Italian who is offended if you put cream in a carbonara, but when it comes to fish traditions, he doesn't even blink.

[00:19:38] **Anna:** Sure, sure. So, I noticed that you have already started to introduce the project that you are carrying out with Worldrise. So, the Merioir project in the context of the SEAstainable initiative. Could you tell us more about this initiative? What are the objectives? What are the results, if you have already seen some of them? And maybe if you can explain a little bit about the impact that this project and this initiative has had on the territory, since they are very localised in certain areas.

[00:20:11] **Stefano:** Yes, our SEAstainable project in the meantime was actually born very much linked to the Ligurian territory, precisely because its first project when it was born was precisely to create a network of restaurants in Genoa, so precisely located in the city of Genoa, that cooked fish, but who

wanted to draw on a restaurateur's ethics so they would not use certain products, i.e. those products that, as I said before and as Mattia also said, are now ubiquitous and also extremely well known precisely because of all the dynamics that have arisen in recent years, in which the world of cooking has had a lot of spotlights shone on them. The culinary world has been at the centre of the media dynamics, among various culinary programmes which, however, when talking about fish, always referred to just a few fish species, namely salmon, tuna, swordfish...

So, in our project, in this network of restaurants, restaurateurs have chosen precisely to adopt a much more local ethic, much more linked to seasonality, without using non-local, non-sustainable products. And then from there, as a project, again in the local sphere, we are creating our own guides to the seasonal fish of the Ligurian Sea. This is because we have observed that Italian seas are not all the same: each sea has its own characteristics, each sea, even just along the Italian coast, has its own fish, has its own species, which have their own different seasonality, have their own different ecological dynamics. So we have this guide that can be used by both the public and customers, by anyone interested in learning more. But we then distribute it, of course, also within the restaurants that are part of the network.

Then as the last project, the one we also involved Mattia in, was the Meroir project. And that was a project in this case instead spread over two regions, present in both Liguria and Emilia-Romagna, in this case also thanks to the help of the Experimental Centre for Habitat Protection, of CESTHA. These two poles, precisely because, as I was saying before, the two seas (Adriatic Sea and Ligurian Sea) are completely different, so it was interesting to see some of the dynamics related to fish consumption and fishing in these two hotspots, so to speak. We really carried out field research work related to those who are ultimately the first to be linked to fishing: they are the fishermen. That is, we actually carried out interviews with fishermen all along the Romagna coast and all along the Ligurian coast, we talked to them and got to know them, we saw what their opinions are, what fishing techniques are most used, the species that go the most and the species that go the least. We kind of did a whole survey just to identify what we ultimately think is kind of the focus of sustainable fishing. First of all, does sustainable fishing exist (question mark)? From our point of view, yes, it does. Then, sustainable fishing is mainly local fishing, traditional artisanal fishing, which unfortunately is the type of fishing that is also the most harassed by the governmental dynamics that unfortunately try to hit industrial

fishing, which is the most devastating, but in the end, it is always the traditional fishermen, the smaller ones, who are negatively affected, the ones who are the least impacting. Indeed, the ones who could almost act as guardians, because in the end, the traditional fisherman, the local fisherman, is the one who stays most in touch with the sea, is the one who sees, as Mattia said: "I go swimming every day in a place and I see it changing", the fishermen, they have to go out into the sea every day for work and so they are the first to see the dynamics of change, even being the first to be more sensitive actually, because they are the first to see that, when they pull up their nets, they have nets full of plastic or certain fish disappear... So that also makes their own work life more difficult.

So, with this work we have really seen the ethics of the fisherman, which is what defines sustainable fishing. Because sustainable fishing, we have really noticed that it is not so much saying 'the use of this specific technique, if not that other technique', because in the end the techniques now - let me pass it on a bit - when you say about the use of weapons no that some say that it is not the weapon that kills, but the man who wields it. And then it is kind of the same thing. Traditional fishing is done by an ethical fisherman, even though he may be using a technique that is generally defined as impactful such as the trawl net, for example we have seen that in Emilia-Romagna: there is a fisherman who has an extremely traditional trawl net that is very, very small, with wooden otter boards, it is really a historical thing. That type of net is used in such a punctual, specific manner, and with such a limited impact, that it cannot be defined as unsustainable, because that is a net that is in any case used with a certain criterion and with intelligence, dare I say it, a certain ingenuity. At the same time, however, a technique that could be defined as sustainable - speaking of Romagna, for example, the mantis shrimp cages. The mantis shrimp cages can be defined as sustainable because they are cages that are made specifically to fish just the mantis shrimp; therefore, they are extremely selective and one would say, well, then that is a super sustainable technique. But where is the problem? If the fisherman who uses them is unethical, e.g. using hundreds and hundreds of mantis shrimp cages at the same time, it goes without saying that the mantis shrimps disappear. So, ethical, sustainable gear becomes unsustainable. So, in the end in this research we arrived at this definition.

[00:25:52] **Anna:** So sustainable fishing exists, based on your project and your observations. We know that this is a particularly critical question lately, and one that cannot be taken for granted, and therein lies the importance of this project. Then in my opinion, a very important element that you have rightly highlighted

Stefano, is the fact that this project has allowed you to understand what the characteristics of sustainable fishing are, in a specific way, because sustainable fishing is traditional fishing, and traditional fishing is fishing that is absolutely linked to the territory, and therefore the characteristics of traditional sustainable fishing in Liguria are not the same as traditional sustainable fishing in Emilia-Romagna. So, we have this figure of the traditional fisherman, who not only practises a much less impactful fishing activity, thanks to traditional equipment and techniques that are less impactful, but is also an ethical fisherman, from the point of view of their mindset, right?

[00:27:01] **Stefano:** Yes, it is certainly the mentality, precisely because fishermen, as in all human societies... Talking to fishermen is not always easy, because the world of fishermen is a very closed enclave. They are a society, in short, that looks very suspiciously at those who pose as environmentalists. But the moment you make it clear that you are not going against them, they are then very open and they are also extremely nice. They are also very eager to talk about their experiences, and many of them, just as there are some fishermen who are actually a bit of a pirate, let's call them that, who if they almost brag about being pillars of really causing a lot of damage to the marine world. But so there are also others who are both very forward-looking precisely because they may even have been the first to promote things that most fishermen view with hatred, such as marine protected areas.

In Liguria, we met some fishermen from the very old school, practically retired, who told us how they had already seen ahead with regard to the establishment of marine protected areas. Even with difficulty, because they were also threatened by the other fishermen, but they were among the few who supported the establishment of, perhaps, the Portofino marine protected area. They are few, but there are like young fishermen, who are starting to have a different mentality, who are perhaps open enough to receive the traditions and techniques of the old school, but open-minded, with an awareness of the fact that traditional fishing must also adapt to new realities, such as the establishment of protected areas, allochthonous species, as Mattia told us, because you have to change a bit in order to survive. So there are glimmers that still give the idea that the ethics of the fisherman exist, the ethical fishermen exist, and we have also wanted to identify them a little bit with this project.

[00:29:06] **Anna:** You wanted to highlight these personalities. I have one last question regarding this project: I was wondering how this project was received,

or even perceived, by the local communities? Obviously, you have already explained what the fishermen's point of view is, but I was wondering if you had interacted, and in what way, with other local actors.

[00:29:34] **Stefano:** Look, more on the issue of stakeholders, I have to admit that, as a project officer of a project related to sustainable fishing, I actually sometimes feel a bit like the bat or like Balto, who is neither a dog, nor a wolf, he just knows what he is not. Because from the fishermen's point of view, we are considered as an environmental association, and so at the beginning we always have a shield raised by the fishermen, who view us with distrust; but at the same time, even in the world of environmentalism, to be in favour of fishing and not in the style of *Seaspiracy*, basically much more upright and much more extremist points of view, we are seen a bit as traitors, as those who, I don't want to exaggerate, but we often receive comments like “you support fishing, but fishing is evil”. So we are in a bit of a limbo in which, on the one hand, the most extreme environmentalists view us with distrust, but also the less ethical and more traditionalist fishermen, who perhaps view marine protected areas negatively, view us with distrust, because we are still an environmental association.

Actually, speaking of direct stakeholders who are always very keen to learn more, I think about our outreach work related to hospitality schools. In short, the world of catering and the world of chefs, especially in hospitality schools, where students rarely have anything to do with learning how to cook fish. Because unfortunately in hospitality schools, apart from a very few, very rare exceptions of those perhaps with more money, most schools do not have the skills, not even the basic skills to explain to the students how to cook the more local, less exploited fish such as those Mattia mentioned.

One thing that gave us great satisfaction in this project was precisely that of putting the chefs, but those who will be the future chefs, such as students, in direct contact with the reality of fishermen, and one thing we did in this project was to go beyond the show cooking carried out by the chefs, as in the example of Mattia for Cervia and Porto Garibaldi. Following that, the guys went to meet the fishermen directly at the fish market precisely because we wanted to create this link between the local fisherman and the person who could then become a future, in short, customer or in any case the person who could somehow exploit this new knowledge of this species, of this traditional fishery for his future work. And from my point of view, from when I did the activity in Liguria, I was very

pleased to see the kids from the hospitality school so interested in hearing the stories of the fishermen here in Liguria in the west, in Genoa.

[00:32:34] **Anna:** So, here you go, this project has given future generations of Italian chefs the opportunity to discuss fishermen, with professionals in the fishing sector. This is certainly an intergenerational element, a dialogue that should exist, from which many sectors should take inspiration. In this respect, what role do you think chefs, or restaurateurs, can play in raising awareness? So what can be the importance of training chefs who are more aware and who can then also contribute to the responsible consumption of sustainable seafood products by the end consumer?

[00:33:13] **Mattia:** I think that besides sustainable fishing, the first thing that should be done is sustainable spending. Let's consider the fact that fishermen fish not for self-consumption, but only to resell. If they have a public that buys in an ethical manner and therefore maybe they are more attentive to the final product, they are more attentive in maybe diversifying their weekly shopping a little bit or a restaurant that buys in a diversified manner, the producer, that is the fisherman, is also already incentivised to change a little bit his working methods. So that is the first thing. The second thing, which I see very much, is a very simple thing that we can do from the catering point of view is to go and replace some products that are perhaps impacting.

Now, I have also collaborated with the guys from CESTHA and also with them for the discourse on sharks, the preservation of sharks. We have, in our tradition, fish soup, where it is normal to include the dogfish in our fish soup. We don't realise that the dogfish is actually a shark and suffers from the same problems that all other sharks suffer from, so perhaps replacing the dogfish in a soup with another fish that may be less impactful and in any case is abundant in our seas, with a small gesture that is insignificant and does not harm the final result of the recipe, we are safeguarding a species that takes a lot of years to become mature, which is also endangered... and so already with a small gesture we are able to make a big difference. Valuing, as I said before, the local product, hence also the discussion around cuttlefish. The cuttlefish is a product that for me, and also talking to the guys at CESTHA, is a sustainable product. Its fishing method is not impactful, it is a product that regenerates itself annually, even though there is a period where maybe it is more suitable to fish it, maybe not to fish it when they are small. And I know that in the kitchen the small size is always appreciated, especially in cuttlefish, because cooking them is much easier, so



they taste better in the mouth because they are cooked a bit less. The problem is, however, that a small cuttlefish is a cuttlefish that still has to grow; therefore, we are going to destroy the sea even before it bears fruit.

On the other hand, as far as the youth are concerned, the future chefs take their cue from what they see from the older people. So, it's us, now - I take myself as an adult person, but actually I'm still young, I hope... -, I see that the kids take a lot of cues from what you show them, what you buy or how you use a product; so, it's you who has to give them the example. So if you are already predisposed to teach them respect for the sea, respect for the raw material, but also respect for the raw material from the point of view of how you treat it, how you handle it, how you conserve it, don't buy in excess, don't make waste, try to use a product to the fullest... then you have already created a person who, one day, will be a little more respectful of the raw material and the sea. Because let's consider that, from the restaurant point of view, a fish has more than fifty per cent waste. So, if we go and analyse part from the point of view of cost - fish is already not that cheap - but in addition we have fifty percent that goes into the bin. If we manage to make the most of this fifty per cent and try to create an economic return from a labour point of view, but also a return on the product, it goes without saying that we will need less and less of it and we will be able to use that product fully. So, whether to make broths, or to make, I don't know, soups with the innards, you can make bottarga with the eggs, you can make stews with the cheeks... In other words, you can use practically everything from fish. All you need to have is, as I said before, the will to get involved, the will to invest your time. It's a concept that you have to bring forward in the cuisine world.

[00:37:22] **Anna:** At this point I was wondering if you had started to notice a change, a positive trend, towards greater sustainability, greater care in the choice of raw materials by chefs, by restaurateurs. That is, do you see, above all, that perhaps the younger chefs are returning a little to a cuisine more tied to tradition, in order to be able to choose products that are more sustainable?

[00:37:50] **Mattia:** I see a lot that young people are more ethically aware of respect for the sea. A little because perhaps this effort we have made to convey a message, has helped. But I also see a lot of catering - I always speak from a catering point of view because it is my environment - that is very improvised. When there is improvised cuisine there is no knowledge of the raw materials, as I said before, and therefore all the ethical discourse, the discourse of the local



product, goes down the drain, because then people go for what is easier to cook, faster, more immediate. Young people, I see, are approaching the discourse, as I said before, not so much out of curiosity, but rather for fashion. Now there's the fashion of blending fish, the fashion of using fish innards, which is a fashion that will be fleeting because anyway, in catering there is a new fashion trend every year... So, those who do it well, do it because they have knowledge, they have studied, because they believe in what they are doing. But unfortunately, many restaurants don't do it ethically or logically, they just do it because it's fashionable. We have these trends, and they last for those two or three years and then fade away. So those who do it in a really conscientious way will continue to pursue their idea and will definitely benefit from it. Those who do it just because it's cool, then it will end shortly for them. However, I think and reiterate that we must try to help the end consumer, but not the consumer referred to the restaurateur, but more to the very end customer, to make an ethical purchase, because the chain that precedes them is all derived from the end consumer [00:39:45], i.e. the customer who sits in the restaurant and eats a shrimp or eats a cuttlefish that does not come from our sea, or who eats dogfish... The restaurateur has no other ways and means to fight back. No restaurateur, no fisherman says no to a certain amount of earnings or customers because he has to use, say, prawns or shrimp fished in Cesenatico and charge twice as much as the fried fish made by his "neighbour" because it is counterproductive for him, it is counterproductive for his economy. [00:40:22]

[00:39:47] **Mattia:** So, we must be very attentive to the end consumer, to make him understand the importance of traditional products and what they are, especially the products that are found in our sea and those that are not.

[00:40:01] **Anna:** There must be awareness on the part of all those who then come into contact with your cuisine, and therefore also and above all the end consumer who is precisely your customer.

So, guys, we are getting to the end here, but since we've been talking about young people and future generations, and since Stefano you work in an organisation that is founded by young people, but which is also dedicated to young people, I was wondering if you could also share your thoughts on the role and importance of young people in environmental protection in general, and specifically in the protection of the Mediterranean Sea.

[00:40:50] **Stefano:** Yes, yes, certainly. Let's say that the role of young people, especially in this very world of associationism, we can also see a bit with the most famous and most glaring example of Greta Thunberg.

Having an association that is made up of both people with a certain experience, obviously, but whose base is made up of young people who have a different energy, a different positivity, a different way of approaching these issues, is certainly very stimulating, when you have the awareness to say that you are young, therefore with a lot of creativity, a lot of desire to do, but always open to learning from those who know more. That is, if you maintain this balance between the energy, the creativity of the young person, plus the desire, the open-mindedness in accepting the teachings of the older ones, it is always quite a winning combination.

[00:41:49] **Anna:** And reminding ourselves that we never stop learning. So, we must always seek constructive confrontation with other generations. Thank you very much. I would like to close our episode by asking a question that we often ask IOCS guests. The question is: if you could choose one message about the Mediterranean Sea that you could share with our listeners, what would that message be? Let's start with Mattia.

[00:42:18] **Mattia:** So, my message is to experience the sea in such a way that we can see with our own eyes the energy it can give and above all we can truly experience what it wants to communicate to us. Because the sea changes all the time, it changes its energy, and so we can truly perceive what the sea wants to communicate to us, both when it is angry and when it is polluted... we unfortunately see it change before our eyes. So, if we experience the sea, we go out to sea, we are able to breathe in this energy and then when we come back to land, we continue to communicate this energy in our dishes or in what we eat, or even in our daily lives.

[00:43:02] **Stefano:** I wanted to express a lesson I learned from this work I did together with Mattia, in the context of Merair. What I learnt from this work, getting in touch with fishermen, was also the value of humility, of really understanding the phrase 'anyone can become your teacher'. These fishermen, who are usually portrayed as the humbler category of workers in the marine sphere, actually talking to them, I learnt how they are actually the first to be in love with the sea, but they have just chosen another path to remain constantly in touch with this natural element, and how most of the time when talking to them,

they are often much more knowledgeable, perhaps they know a lot more about the sea than those, like me or others, who have only learnt about it from books. And they see it every day.

And this has to be taught, first of all, not to judge a book by its cover; and then, to learn a little bit about this universe that is so open, also because the community of fishermen, as I was telling you before, seems very closed at first, but then, when you open it up, you discover how in reality among them they are almost a sort of brotherhood that never sees eye to eye with the person in front of it. I mean, fishermen can be Sicilian, Ligurian, in the end they are all fishermen, so they all see each other as brothers, a big family that obviously can have internal divisions, like all families, but they always support each other in the end.

[00:44:33] **Anna:** So, there is also this sense of sharing one great resource, right? Of one great ocean, uniting all the seas.

[00:44:41] **Stefano:** They are the first to see the fact that the sea has no borders. The sea, all things that are touched by the sea are all united.

[00:44:50] **Anna:** Thank you Mattia and Stefano, and that's all for today. Thank you both for sharing your ideas for giving us so much food for thought, not only about the world of responsible cooking and consumption, but also about sustainable fishing. Your stories and experiences have really enriched, in my opinion, this season of If Oceans Could Speak, completely dedicated to the Mediterranean Sea. In the meantime, we thank you all very much for listening to this episode, and until next time!

[00:45:17] **Anna:** This podcast is brought to you by the members of the EU4Ocean Coalition and was produced by the "If Oceans Could Speak" production team. It is directed by Anna Saito, co-hosted by Penny Clarke and Arne Riedel, co-presented and edited by Stefan Kirchner, Jen Frier, Vera Noon, Agnes Nohra, Pierre Strosser, Francisco Lopez Castejon, and myself, Anna Maria Marino. We thank you for listening and will be back next week with a new story on the Mediterranean Sea, in Arabic. If you would like to follow along, there will be an English language transcript and translation, and I highly recommend that you do so. If the ocean had a voice, what would it say to you?



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[ENG] what would it say to you?

[FR] what would it say to you?

[ESP] what would it say to you?

[ARA] what would it say to you?

