MEDIA KIT
2017/8
Open Blue is a pioneer and leader in open-ocean raised fish, operating the largest open ocean mariculture system in the world. We have created a new paradigm in the industry, one that allows fish to thrive in their natural environment so that we can guarantee the best tasting, healthiest fish possible. We offer innovative and responsible open ocean mariculture solutions that respect the ocean and enrich lives.

Open Blue is the culmination of nearly a decade of cutting edge investigative research on deep ocean Mariculture in collaboration with the world’s leading scientific laboratories and universities. We are on a quest to provide fish that nourishes generations now and far into the future, and doing it all in harmony with the ocean. With a deep reverence for the world around us, we are committed to taking care of the delicate ecosystem of fish, ocean and people. We are on a continual search for the best water, the best processes and the most natural environments to harvest the perfect fish.

INNOVATIVE OPEN OCEAN MARICULTURE

Our fish are raised far offshore and away from sensitive ecosystems. Located 12 kilometers off the coast our waters are deep, clean and full of oxygen. Our fish are raised in low-density, fully submerged enclosures; swim in high-energy currents and never see the same water twice. Our approach means a natural growing environment for our fish.

Excellence and innovation are at the heart of everything we do. Our fish are raised in a vertically integrated platform, starting from our state of the art hatchery, to our processing operations, to our distribution network.
OPEN BLUE COBIA

We take incredible care in raising our fish and it shows. Open Blue Cobia is an impressive fish in quality and taste. We take pride in every step of the process, ensuring we bring you the best possible fish. What you get is the purest, healthiest, best tasting white fish on the market.

COBIA CULINARY VERSATILITY
Open Blue Cobia is a truly versatile fish that offers a world of culinary possibilities. The high quality sashimi grade means you can enjoy it raw or cooked across a wide range of applications. It has a rich, buttery flavor and a firm texture that is uniquely delicious any way its prepared; and is often described as swordfish meets Chilean Sea Bass.

ENRICHING HEALTH & NUTRITION
Open Blue Cobia is pure, healthy and safe – free of contaminants, hormones, colorants and pesticides. We raise our fish in a stress free, low density and high-energy environment. This results in healthy fish that is naturally high in protein and very rich in Omega 3. Open Blue Cobia is incredibly high in EPA & DHA, the fatty acids that promote heart health, cognitive development and have anti-aging properties.

Outside analysis shows that Open Blue Cobia has almost double the amount of EPA & DHA content compared to Farmed Atlantic Salmon (3.3 g / 100 g vs. 1.82 g / 100g).

ENVIRONMENTALLY & sociaLLy RESPONSIBLE
A healthy environment means healthy fish, and keeping our waters pure and pristine is key to what we do. That’s why we protect the water where we raise our fish. We have established a commercial no take zone spanning over 10 square kilometers – making it a protected marine zone. We carefully and consistently monitor our surrounding environment and are proud to say that there has been minimal impact to the ecosystem around us.
We are on a continual search for the best water, the best processes, and the most natural environments to harvest the perfect fish. We have extensive on-going research programs in place that focus on understanding our fish, their nutrition and their ideal diet. Our feed is comprised of natural marine based oils and proteins and is sourced from carefully selected suppliers committed to sustainable harvest practices. Our feed does not contain hormones, or colorants.

We are strongly focused on making a difference in the communities where we work, live and play. We are especially proud to support our communities on the Caribbean coast of Panama where many of our local employees live. Sourcing local products, supporting education, establishing scholarships, and building community wells are just some of the ways we contribute to the communities in the area.

COMPANY HISTORY

After years of planning and innovating with small-scale operations, Brian O’Hanlon founded Open Blue in 2007. From a family with three generations in the seafood business, Brian realized his vision for an innovative and sustainable fish farm at an early age. Since then, we have been dedicated to filling an industry need for premium quality fish, raised in a natural and controlled environment.
OPEN BLUE COBIA FAQ’s

WHAT IS COBIA?
Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) – also known as black kingfish, black salmon, kuro kampachi, ling, and lemonfish can be found across the world in tropical and subtropical waters, including the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. They are most commonly found in clean, offshore waters around drifting and stationary objects, which allows them to adapt well to life in large open ocean net enclosures. Open Blue Cobia has a rich, buttery and fresh flavor and a firm texture – its often compared to swordfish or Chilean Sea Bass.

WHERE ARE THE FISH RAISED?
We raise our fish in waters where Cobia can naturally be found. Our farm is located in the Costa Arriba region of Panama. The farm site is located over the horizon in Panama’s Caribbean Sea, more than 12 kilometers offshore in waters that are 65 – 70 meters deep.

WHAT ARE OPEN OCEAN RAISED FISH?
Our fish are raised far from shore where the waters are deep, clean and pure. It is a high-energy environment where the fish never see the same water twice and the surrounding environment is protected. Our fish are healthy and have a clean good taste with a firm texture.

DOES OPEN BLUE COBIA HAVE PCB’S, COLORANTS, HORMONES, PESTICIDES OR OTHER CONTAMINANTS?
Absolutely not, our fish are raised in a pristine environment and fed a clean, controlled diet. We regularly sample our fish to verify that they are clean and healthy.

WHAT IS IN YOUR FEED?
We do our best to mimic Cobia’s natural diet as closely as possible. Our feed includes fishmeal, fish oil, plant proteins, vitamins and minerals. Our diets are free of hormones, colorants, pesticides and prophylactic antibiotics. We continue to monitor feed ingredients and make the best decision for our customers, our fish and the sustainability of our company and the ocean.
DOES THE FEED EVER MAKE IT THROUGH THE NET AND TO THE BOTTOM? HOW DO YOU REGULATE THAT?
The feeding process is carefully controlled using underwater cameras, diver inspection and sophisticated computer modeling to ensure the right amount of feed is given to the fish in the enclosure based on quantity and size.

We monitor the health of the seafloor under the farm using cameras on our ROV (remote operated robotic vehicle) and taking grab samples to collect sediments for lab analysis. We do the sampling under the farm and away from the farm at a control site to monitor any changes to the condition of the seafloor. We do not see any significant impact to the seafloor and this is by design, because our farms are located in high energy areas, with brisk currents and in very deep water and we employ strict feed management practices.

ARE OTHER FISH HANGING AROUND THE ENCLOSURES, IF SO WHAT TYPE?
The farms are essentially located in the “deserts” of the sea so naturally the large underwater structures create an “oasis” teeming with life and are essentially a large protected area for wild fish. We see various species of snapper, remora, jacks, small tuna and other pelagic fish congregating around the enclosures.

DO HURRICANES OR STORMS EVER ENDANGER THE FISH OR THE ENCLOSURES?
The entire farm is normally submerged 10 meters below the surface, so it is safe from storms and other bad weather. We do not get hurricanes in Panama, but in the rainy season we can have severe thunderstorms with strong wind. Our enclosures have been custom designed for our unique platform to withstand extreme weather conditions.

IS OPEN BLUE COBIA TRACEABLE?
Absolutely! We manage the entire lifecycle of the fish from egg to plate. We know all of the details about the fish’s life, from when it hatched and what it consumed to the quality water it lived in and when it was harvested, processed, shipped and sold.

WHAT IS THE AVAILABILITY OF OPEN BLUE COBIA?
Open Blue Cobia are available year round, our internal logistics department works around the clock to ensure our customers get the best quality fish, the quickest way possible.
Brian O’Hanlon has asked to leave the doors off our helicopter. He wants our pilot to fly low over the rain forest of Panama and out over the ocean. But once we get to the other coast of this country that seems barely wider than someone’s finger, the pilot is nearly lost. He turns around, terrifyingly, and asks through our headsets where he should go next. O’Hanlon is sitting in the backseat and keeps saying the same thing while jutting his arm forward. “Todo derecho,” he says, in Spanish. He is telling the pilot to go straight. Even in the air, O’Hanlon knows the way by heart to a farm that he built from nothing, out in the middle of nowhere. Eight miles off the coast of Panama on the Caribbean side (most people visit the Pacific coast) we start to see net domes peeking out of the water. They’re like icebergs—most of their mass is underwater. Inside the domes are some 600,000 fish living out their days in the warm Caribbean, eating real food, drinking real water, and nudged by real currents. O’Hanlon is next to me, pointing down and grinning. Later that day he will tell me three times that unlike conventional aquaculture farms where fish swim in their own you-know-what, his fish never see the same water twice.

Below us happens to be the largest open-ocean fish farm in the world. Aquaculture isn’t new. Since the days of the Chinese Shang dynasty humans have raised fish to supplement the unpredictable yield of the sea. The idea has always been to corral fish in tanks or pools. At some point, people just got tired of taking a boat out right before dinner.

O’Hanlon’s farm, which is part of a company he founded called Open Blue, wants to buck 4,000 years of human innovation and farm fish back in the ocean. He says that raising an animal in its natural habitat means it will be healthier and taste better and, with the right technology, grow far more efficiently. Some have said he’s pioneering a new form of aquaculture. O’Hanlon is on his way to shipping 250 tons of fish each month, a respectable haul for a midsize company under ten years old. Every few days, planes take what once swam in his underwater enclosures off to Asia, Europe, and North America. He started the operation in Panama in 2009, and last year, for the first time, demand exceeded supply.

Panama might seem a strange place to hatch a global idea. The country is smaller than New Jersey and reliant on the United States government to keep its currency stable. But Panama’s unique geography with easy access to two oceans makes it cheap and convenient to move feed in and fish out.

The government of Panama also welcomed O’Hanlon in a way the U.S. wouldn’t. Harsh regulations, stiff environmental opposition,
and “not in my backyard” complaints from coastal communities made his idea unworkable off the coast of Florida or South Carolina, both of which are home to large American ports. The U.S. would give him a permit, but only for a few years. Then he’d have to invest in boats, processing facilities, and distribution infrastructure. “What we’re trying to do takes a lot of capital and commitment,” he said. “You need to be able to think long term about this, at least 20 years into the future.”

The other reason he chose Panama is the real hero of the story: cobia, the fish he’s farming. The first time I heard of cobia was in Josh Schonwald’s book The Taste of Tomorrow. Schonwald spent a few years asking people what new ingredients chefs might demand in the future and how farmers would experiment with new crops. Fish we eat now, like salmon and Chilean sea bass, are largely inefficient to produce. With fewer and more expensive resources, Schonwald concluded, farmers would turn to other species that could convert feed to protein faster. Consumers, in turn, would change their tastes.

He arrived at cobia as the holy grail. Unlike salmon, it goes from egg to 11-pound (5-kilogram) fish in about a year (salmon takes three). Unlike tilapia, it is sashimi-grade fish that can be used for high-end sushi. Unlike carp, it doesn’t taste fishy.

Salmon, tilapia, and carp are the world’s top farmed fish. Most aquaculture occurs in Asia, where overfished oceans have pushed fish farming inland, into concrete pools and tanks pumped with oxygen. The feed used is finely crafted to maximize nutrition. The measure of aquaculture efficiency is the feed-conversion ratio, or FCR: How many pounds of food does it take to yield one pound of meat? For tilapia and most carp species, the ratio is 1.6 to 1. Salmon are among the sleekest, coming in at 1.2 to 1.

Cobia has a way to go. Over the past ten years, cobia’s FCR has dropped to around 2 to 1. O’Hanlon is confident it can one day rival salmon’s. But what makes cobia prime for farming now is that it doesn’t mind population density. Confining fish often stunts growth. In a tank the size of a Jacuzzi, Open Blue can raise 15,000 fish, each the size of a paper clip. In three days they’ll double in size. Eventually they’ll be moved to the ocean enclosures. A year from now each will cover the entire rack of someone’s barbecue.

“The way I look for sharks,” O’Hanlon says. “We’re on the deck of his boat, floating a few feet from one of the cobia enclosures. O’Hanlon drops to his knees, then lies flat on his stomach and dunks his face in the water. He pushes his head deeper and deeper until it looks as though he’ll fall overboard. Then he does. When he comes up, he wipes the water from his eyes. “Yeah, there’s a pretty big bull shark down there,” he announces to the boat.
a 12-year-old trying out for the Boston Red Sox. A few years ago marketers had the idea to nickname cobia “black salmon.” Why they came up with black—the fish is mostly silver, and the meat is white—no one seems to know.

Finally one day in February I found a restaurant not far from my house in Washington, D.C., that occasionally served cobia. Like any other restaurant, it depended on the catch and whether the restaurant could stock the fish. So I waited. Finally one day I called; it had just gotten a shipment of cobia—by sheer coincidence, from O’Hanlon’s farm in Panama. I went with my colleague Spencer for lunch. I ordered pan-seared cobia with gnocchi, pine nuts, and roasted cauliflower. Spencer had cobia fish tacos. The meat was thick, almost like cutting through beef. It was lean but juicy and took on the flavor of an accompanying cream sauce. I asked Spencer if he’d order it again. He paused and said yes.

The restaurant’s fishmonger, a man dressed in black and named MJ Gimbar, described cobia as a “good eating fish” that has potential for market growth. “It’s a chef’s dream to find something that’s reliably sourced year-round and grows quickly and sustainably,” he said. “The only thing now is to get people to eat it.” The bigger questions may be whether cobia can overcome people’s emotional attachment to salmon and Chilean sea bass, even if those fish are more costly and environmentally demanding to produce.

Our final night in Panama, O’Hanlon offered another opportunity to try cobia, this time cooked on a barbecue on the beach. Someone brought a bucket with two fish, each the length of a man’s torso. We laid one down on a picnic table and stared at it together. I asked O’Hanlon if he could ever imagine these guys swimming in suspended enclosures off the coast of California.

“‘It’s a chef’s dream to find something that’s reliably sourced year-round and grows quickly and sustainably.’”
—FISHMONGER MJ GIMBAR

“That’s the dream, man,” he said, nodding. He said he had to show that the model worked before he’d be able to scale up with cobia and other fish. Success would also invite competition. “You work and work at something, and then one day, somehow it’ll happen.” Then he looked up and asked no one in particular how to say “knife” in Spanish.
Innovation

Nutrition

Versatility
Environment

Community

Open ocean pioneers