

À l'Ostendaise

FLAG: West Flanders FLAG

Belgium

Project overview

À l'Ostendaise, brings together local fishermen and restaurants to create and promote a new market for local fish, turning them into quality dishes in Ostend's top restaurants.



Promoted by Ostend's Tourism Office, a key aim of the project was to attract visitors and owners of second homes in Ostend to spend more time in the city outside peak season. The idea was to do this by reviving Ostend's reputation as a fishing town and promoting it as a place where diners can enjoy fashionable dishes based on quality ingredients – and, in particular, fresh fish caught locally and in season.

The project includes a series of activities and promotional campaigns to celebrate and promote fish and seafood caught by Ostend's fleet. A two-day launch event was organised on the town's redeveloped sea front in which 25 selected restaurants

were invited to have a stand and take on the challenge of proposing fish dishes based on local seasonal fish. This was followed by the integration of the "à l'Ostendaise" menu into the regular offer of participating restaurants who must undertake to propose a menu based on the two species of local fish designated for that month. Moreover, the restaurants take turns to host two monthly dinners where the first 10 people to book can enjoy the "à l'Ostendaise" menu in the company of a local fisherman who shares his knowledge and stories about the different local species and techniques used to fish them. The dinner also includes a guided tour of the port area and often a presentation of the menu by the chef.

The "à l'Ostendaise menu" has been accompanied by significant promotion in the local and foreign press as well as on television, billboards and posters. The cooking channel, Njam, for example, regularly broadcasts the "fisherman's challenge" in which the chefs of participating restaurants are challenged to develop new recipes using designated local fish. Moreover, viewers are offered the chance to win a dinner for two at the monthly "à l'Ostendaise" dinner with a fisherman. A website has also been developed in four languages to provide information on the project and the participating restaurants as well as on the different fish in season, the recipes developed for them and the maritime guided tour.

Key lessons

- › **Relevance to FARNET themes:** tourism, adding value to fisheries products, cooperation between fishermen and restaurants.
- › **Effectiveness/efficiency:** Some results can already be highlighted, starting with the launch event in June 2013 that attracted 10 000 people who bought a total of 1 240kg of prepared fish (approx. 3 700kg of whole fish). The event helped to extend the short July-August tourist season in Ostend and was considered so successful that the tourist office will run it again in June 2014. Local fishermen were so pleased that they will offer tastings in the town's winter event.

25 top restaurants are taking part in the project and more are on the waiting list. Restaurants have benefited from successful promotion and in return have been developing new recipes for local fish while raising awareness of typically undervalued species, such as dogfish and brill, which customers pay approximately €45 per head to enjoy as part of the *à l'Ostendaise* menu. 170 people booked the guided maritime tour in the first three months which has led to the development of an [app](#) that visitors can download and follow at leisure. The "fishermen's challenge" was produced and broadcast for dogfish (viewed by 95 433 people), langoustine (54 022 people) and plaice (55 591 people).



- › **Transferability:** This is an excellent example of promoting an area's local fisheries activities and products while attracting both locals and tourists to restaurants that prize sustainability. Similar activities could be envisaged for many fishing communities where local fish struggles to compete with cheaper or better known fish species.
- › **Final Comment:** Work continues on traceability along the fish chain and capacity building for fishermen. Systems for checking that participating restaurants comply with the rules on recommended fish species are in place. However, given that all fish in Belgium must be sold through the auction, work is now underway with wholesales to encourage them to pass on more information (e.g. which boat fish comes from) to clients such as restaurants. At the request of participating fishermen, training is also envisaged to develop presentation skills that will give them confidence in addressing groups to explain their work and products.

Total cost and EFF contribution

Total Project total: €369 038

- › EFF Axis 4: €134 698.87 (36.5%)
- › Flemish Government: €36 903.80 (10%)
- › Provincial government: €36 903.80 (10%)
- › Ostende Tourism Office: €55 355.70 (15%)
- › SDVO – Sustainable Fisheries: €105 175.83 (28.5%)

Project information

Title: *À l'Ostendaise*

Duration: January 2013 to September 2014

Case study date: December 2013

Project promoter

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