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# In Our Hands: DC's Top Chefs, Bartenders and Restaurateurs Band Together to End the Canadian Seal Hunt

July 22, 2009

WASHINGTON — The plight of the harp seals is among the priorities of Meshelle & Cathal Armstrong — long among the area's most vital leading proponents of local farms, humanely treated animals and the community. Both Meshelle and her husband Chef Cathal Armstrong of Restaurant Eve, The Majestic, Eamonn's A Dublin Chipper and PX worked with The Humane Society of the United States as they and their friends Ellen and Chef Todd Gray of Equinox threw a fete to bring attention to the treatment of seals and honor the participants of the Canadian seafood boycott. Washington, D.C. was the launch city for this event, which will be taken nationwide.

"Canada should consider what other countries have done — eco-tourism. Charge visitors to come and see the seal nurseries up close and personal. Open up occupations for guides and experts who can educate those tourists on the beauty and wonder that exists there. The time when humans can just take whatever we want whenever we want for our own satisfaction is over," Meshelle said.

By encouraging restaurants, chefs and consumers to boycott Canadian seafood, The Humane Society of the United States intends to convince Canada's fishing industry to stop participating in and supporting the bloody commercial seal hunt each spring in the Atlantic Ocean.

"Having so many well-known and respected chefs joining together in our nation's capital will help shine a light on the cruelty committed in Atlantic Canada and apply additional pressure on the Canadian government to end the senseless slaughter of baby seals once and for all," said Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States. "I cannot thank Meshelle and Cathal Armstrong, Nigel Barker and the more than 70 other chefs who joined us at Policy Tuesday night enough for their commitment to helping this cause."

On May 20, women in the restaurant industry and their children gathered for a portrait at The Lincoln Memorial. This shot, entitled *Sirens for the Seals*, is the fete's invitation and calling card. It is a captivating, black-and-white photo of women chefs and restaurateurs who have signed the boycott pledge, with their children holding stuffed baby seals. The women, dressed in white, were photographed while extending one hand, outstretched in a "stop!" position. The hands are colored red, making a strong visual statement.

On July 21, at the hot new glam spot Policy, D.C.'s top chefs, including Michel Richard, Eric Ziebold, Nora Pouillon, Robert Wiedmaier and Michelle and Christophe Poteaux, gathered for an event entitled *In Our Hands*. Celebrity fashion photographer and avid supporter of the cause Nigel Barker photographed the chefs in front of original graffiti art by Andrew Fun. The chefs then added their red-paint handprints and signatures to a stark, white canvas — signifying their support of the ban. The canvas will be displayed at galleries around the city.

Policy's theme, "truth, love and liberty," is scribbled elegantly on their walls and screams of the cause. DJ Josh Madden "Spun for the Seals" and New York Housewife Bethenny Frankel offered support for the cause. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres from Restaurant Eve, Equinox and more, with signature cocktails by mix masters Todd Thrasher, Derek Brown and others. The entire evening, a portion of the percentage of cocktails sold at Policy was donated to The HSUS, and an oversized petition was available to guests to sign to show their support. Twenty new chefs added their names to the more than 200 already participating in the ProtectSeals boycott.

The two-tiered operation was designed to involve chefs and their families. A signature photo/poster of some of the most popular and talented women in the hospitality industry, and the chef's party, an event where their significant others from the kitchen will create a signature art piece. Both the canvas and photo will be shared with galleries throughout the U.S., standing as a symbol of their commitment to this important cause.

"The voice of our restaurant community is so strong, we can turn the tide in ending the largest slaughter of marine mammals on Earth," Meshelle explained. "Global opinion has turned in our favor dramatically. The European Union joined the United States and enacted a ban of seal products. It can end this year. Chefs have a key part to play. D.C. has shown how strongly top chefs feel about this issue. From D.C., we'll be taking the Chefs for Seals campaign to other cities — we won't stop until the hunt ends."

*\*\*Note: The ban contains an exemption for products of traditional hunts by Inuit and other indigenous peoples. There are three separate levels of the boycott. Restaurants have pledged at different levels: All Canadian Seafood; Seafood from Sealing Provinces (Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Quebec); or Snow Crabs from Canada. Since the ProtectSeals seafood boycott was launched, more than 600,000 individuals and more than 5,000 grocery stores and restaurants have pledged to avoid some or all Canadian seafood until the commercial seal hunt is ended for good.*

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The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization — backed by 11 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education, and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty — On the web at [humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org).

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