

Product Launch and Ongoing Campaign Kona Blue Water Farms, Inc.

In May 2005, Kona Kampachi™ was an entirely unknown fish, even in Hawai‘i. A year later, roughly 10 million people had read of, seen, or heard about it—generating massive demand that helped put the fish on the menus of dozens of the nation’s finest restaurants and in specialty food markets in eight states. Remarkably, TLC PR accomplished this new product launch without paid advertising by creating a campaign based entirely on media relations and special events.

The rise of Kona Kampachi™ began when TLC PR was contracted by Kona Blue, an innovative aquaculture startup on the Kona coast of the Big Island of Hawai‘i. Kona Kampachi™ was the company’s revolutionary seafood product. Nurtured from hatch to harvest and raised in openocean cages, it showed exceptional flavor with no detectable mercury. It also had the advantage of being sustainably produced at a time when wild fish stocks were being depleted worldwide. The only problem was that no one knew about it.



To change that, TLC PR researched in detail the technical, environmental, and market aspects of Kona Kampachi™. We then used this research to develop a press kit telling the story of the fish from multiple angles—i.e., culinary, health, environmental, Hawaiian culture, and business. We commissioned and compiled photography, and made those images available to journalists via a simple request form in the kit. To reinforce the fish’s positioning as an exotic gourmet product, we designed the kit to incorporate tropical underwater and culinary preparation images. Finally, we created the tag line “The Fish of the Future,” which was frequently picked up by media in describing Kona Kampachi™ as a delicacy backed by progressive science and ecology.

After the research stage, an incremental strategic campaign was developed to promote the fish locally first, then regionally, and finally nationally. The campaign primarily targeted media, food wholesalers, and restaurant-industry decision makers. The goal was to create widespread "buzz" about the fish with insiders as well as the general public.

To launch the campaign locally, TLC PR organized a harvest blessing and tasting event in Kona that introduced stakeholders and media to Kona Kampachi™. A few months later, a Honolulu tasting event was held at an upscale restaurant to promote the fish to a broader audience of media, wholesalers, and consumers statewide. During this phase of the campaign, every major print and broadcast outlet in Hawai'i did a story on Kona Kampachi™.

The next phase of the campaign "followed the fish" as TLC PR supported its entrance into new markets, primarily on the West Coast. The company's staff pitched and followed up with hundreds of major newspapers, trade magazines, consumer publications, and television stations. They also attended trade expositions alongside the company's sales team to assist with media inquiries.

Results: TLC PR's media relations work resulted in 10 million positive media impressions in the first year of the campaign. Coverage included "BBQ with Bobby Flay" on the TV Food Network, *USA TODAY*, National Public Radio, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and the Knight Ridder syndicate. These placements not only generated consumer interest in Kona Kampachi™ but also directly contributed to sales of the fish by wholesalers who had read about the product.

Endorsement: "For a fish, the Kona Kampachi is moving in rarefied circles. The firm is throwing the fish a coming out party that would put a celebutante to shame. The fish has made a splash at every fancy food show. It has racked up more media than a former reality TV star, appearing in the food sections of a number of newspapers, in magazines such as Popular Science, even on National Public Radio as the "Future of Food."

Natural Food Network Magazine May/June 2006