

## Graduate's organic carp farm attracts national TV attention

Contributed by Jimmie Hepburn  
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Channel 4's River Cottage food guru Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall gives the UK's first organic carp the thumbs up as a tasty sustainable alternative. The farm is run by CHE graduate Jimmie Hepburn and his partner Penny.

In the last of three programmes on fish: 'Gone Fishing' (Channel 4, 8pm 22nd November 2007) Hugh visits a pioneering carp farm in Devon which has grown its fish almost entirely on locally sourced organic feeds. This is in stark contrast to virtually all other fish farms in the UK. These farms use highly processed fish pellets that contain a significant proportion of wild caught fish originating from many areas of sea where fish stocks are seriously threatened. Also in the programme, Hugh cooks the carp for an invited taste panel which rates the fish very highly and also explores the idea of growing carp in your own pond for your table!

The organic carp project at Upper Hayne Farm, Devon is the brain child of husband and wife team: Jimmie and Penny Hepburn. The fish are reared at low densities in carefully managed ponds which produce much of the carp's feed naturally (e.g. daphnia). Additional feeds are also given to the carp including meal worms, compost worms and locally sourced wheat grain. A week before harvest, the carp are transferred to natural spring water which thoroughly cleanses the fish and allows the true taste of the carp to be revealed.

The Hepburn's carp is the first in the UK to be grown to the Soil Association's organic standard for carp. The farm is planning on harvesting the first organic carp during 2008 and supplying restaurants, shops and Farmers Markets.

The demand worldwide for fish is increasing, however three quarters of the world's fisheries are either fully or over exploited (FAO). Aquaculture is increasingly playing a key role in supplying this demand, indeed globally, it is the fastest growing food sector. Here in the UK, it is mainly carnivorous fish such as salmon or trout which are farmed. The farming of these species can have a significant environmental impact such as their dependence on wild caught fish which is further threatening wild stocks. An alternative is to grow a species such as carp which occupies a lower level in the food chain requiring less energy to produce the fish protein. In fact more carp are farmed worldwide than any other group of fish – much of this takes place in Asia but also in central and eastern Europe. Although carp were grown in the UK in Medieval times the rapid development of the sea fishing industry led to the taste of carp and other course species to be lost and today carp are only regarded as a sport species.

We have come full circle, it is now important that we not only farm more fish but that we do it as sustainably as possible. This trail blazing project along with Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall's approach demonstrates what is needed to produce a fish which tastes good is much more ecologically responsible and you can even grow the fish yourself!

If you are interested in our project/venture and would like to find out more please visit our website, [www.aquavisiononline.com](http://www.aquavisiononline.com), or contact [info@aquavisiononline.com](mailto:info@aquavisiononline.com)