

Red Caviar Shortage Averted

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A looming shortage of red caviar on the domestic market has been averted with the help of supplies from Alaska, whose fishing industry boasted a record output of the delicacy this season, a governmental official said Tuesday.

Wholesale domestic prices for salmon roe jumped 70 percent to 2,400 rubles (\$75) per kilogram earlier this year in central Russia due to a poor start of the fishing season, but those prices are now back to 800 to 900 rubles (\$25 to \$28) per kilogram, a spokesman for the Federal Fisheries Agency said.

Prices were eased down with incoming supplies of frozen Alaskan caviar, imported to Russia at \$7 to \$9 per kilogram, the spokesman said.

"Merchants tried to drive prices up in July and August due to a less than successful start of the [Russian] fishing season, but that led to large quantities of caviar from Alaska being supplied to the Russian market," the spokesman said.

The caviar shortage was mostly focused in the heavily populated Central Federal District and was exacerbated by a conflict between local merchants and far eastern caviar harvesters, Kommersant reported Tuesday.

Far eastern producers slashed supplies to European Russia this year due to both a rocky start of the fishing season, and the development of new caviar-processing facilities in the sparsely populated provinces of the Far East, the report said.

The Russian market is currently expected to see 15,000 to 16,000 tons of caviar this year, enough to meet domestic demand, the governmental spokesman said. Red caviar in Russia is considered a requisite treat at significant family gatherings and festivities, including, above all, the New Year's celebrations.

An industry expert said that Alaska's record caviar output may continue to flood the Russian market, driving prices further down to the delight of consumers and the chagrin of local harvesters and merchants faced with shrinking profit margins.

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