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## About the tests

(<http://www.suntimes.com/news/metro/379206,CST-NWS-sushilab10.article>)

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To see whether what's presented on sushi menus as red snapper really is, the Sun-Times visited 14 restaurants in the city and suburbs, bought sushi and sent sugar-cube sized samples to Therion International, a Saratoga Springs, N.Y., lab that specializes in genetic testing of animals.

Also shipped to the lab, as a control, was a sample taken from a whole red snapper purchased from a reputable Chicago fish dealer.

Therion ran a DNA analysis on each sample. It compared the DNA sequences to its reference red snapper DNA and also to GenBank, a database of genetic sequences maintained by the government's National Center for Biotechnology Information, part of the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health.

Therion determined the species for all but one sample by matching the DNA sequences to the internal and GenBank standards. Therion owner Will Gergits said the one sample could not be positively identified.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration uses a different method when checking for seafood substitution, called isoelectric focusing. It analyzes proteins, but samples are less stable than in DNA tests, an FDA spokeswoman said.

The FDA is reviewing whether to replace the protein method with DNA testing. The agency is involved with the ongoing global Fish Barcode of Life project -- a genetic database to include all fish species, being put together by Paul Hebert at the University of Guelph in Ontario.

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