



August 2001 - Gone Fishing?

Nanaimo' newest extension to the downtown core is the Fisherman's Wharf. The idea is to provide an area to attract fisherman with catch to sell, therefore creating a market. So far there is a small handful of boats selling their catch, but the Wharf will encourage more boats to participate and soon we should see more variety for us to choose from. The Iron Maiden has been a welcome sight for many years and still to this day you can buy crab, halibut, prawns, salmon and cod, just to name a few. What an excellent way to spend some time, then to amble along the waterfront, stopping at the Wharf to pick up a couple of pounds of large prawns or fresh Halibut to take home to BBQ.

One must be careful when harvesting shellfish and it is advisable if you are not sure if an area is closed, then you should buy your shellfish from a reputable place. One of the biggest toxins to affect the shellfish is Red Tide. This is an algae called *Karenia Brevis* that blooms and creates a reddish brown tinge to the water and can cover hundreds of miles. The algae can be fatal to fin fish but leaves the shellfish unaffected. The shellfish however consume the algae in large quantities and it is stored in various organs making it toxic to humans. The red tide effects the respiratory system in humans and irritations to the eyes, throat, lips and tongue. The symptoms should pass with in 24 hours.

Steamed shell fish

When you buy shellfish, mussels for example they should be absolutely fresh and the shells tightly closed. Thoroughly wash and scrub them removing their beards. If you find a shell party open, check to see if it is still alive by giving it a sharp tap, it should close immediately, if not, it is dead and throw it away.

There are many ways to steam shellfish, on the market you can buy "Steamers" that are electric and designed for this purpose. For those of us that do not have one of these, there are numerous ways of achieving the same effect. One is to use a regular vegetable steamer that fits inside a pot, or a Chinese bamboo steamer. For those of us who have none of these, a pan with a lid with an upside down lid or plate on the bottom will work nicely. You can place the crab or shellfish on the plate and it will act as an excellent steamer. The liquid that you put in the bottom of the pan must come to a simmer before you add the fish. The liquid can just be water or try putting you favourite herbs in the bath and maybe a touch of white wine.

Crab

Most crab you buy today is alive, this way you can be assured of its freshness. To kill a crab, turn the crab upside down on a cutting board and drive the point of a knife or skewer through its brain. Then turn the crab the right way up and grab a corner of the top shell and tear it off. In side you will find Green matter, lungs or spongy fingers and a small sac lying under the shell, this should all be removed and is easiest done under running water. Then you have the option of cutting the crab in half along it back, this will happen naturally, or leaving it whole. The crab should then be put in boiling water for about 15 mins per 1lb whole crab.

Prawns

The best way to prepare the fresh prawns is to boil them in salted or seawater for 3-4 minutes. If they are larger the heads should be removed, this is accomplished by twisting them off.. Sometimes it is desirable to peel the prawns but leave the small-fanned tail at the end for something to hold onto. Along the back is a gut string that can be removed if desired, this is done by cutting the flesh above it with a knife the full length of the prawn, then remove the cord. The prawns, once peeled can be put on a skewer and BBQ'd for a summer treat or simply steamed and enjoyed with some lemon butter.

Deep Fried Halibut or cod

2c Flour
2t Baking powder
1t Salt
2 eggs
4T Vegetable oil
1 1/3c Milk
2/3c light beer-flat.

-Mix together to produce a smooth batter.

-Make sure the fish is not too thick and the pieces are not too large. This will vary depending on the size of the pot used. Make sure the fat is hot, often the greasiness is caused by the fat not being hot enough. Just cook the fish one or two pieces at a time. The fish will be done when the batter is nicely golden.

Tartare Sauce

1/2c Mayonnaise
3 green onions-sliced thinly
1T capers
1T sweet gherkin-finely chopped
1T parsley-finely chopped
2T fresh Dill-finely chopped
1/2t Tarragon
3/4t Dijon

-Mix all the ingredients together and serve with your favourite fish and chips.

For variation try adding some watercress and 2T sourcream.

Lemon Butter

1c Butter-melted
1lemon-juiced

-add together and use for dipping your crab or prawns. Try adding some herbs or garlic.

Cocktail sauce

Ah yes the traditional cocktail sauce, which is a combination of Ketchup, horseradish, parsley and some lemon juice.

Mayonnaise nicoise

1c Mayonnaise
1T capers
1T tomato paste
1T anchovy paste
1 clove garlic-peeled and minced
1T fresh oregano-minced.

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