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COD...THE BEEF OF THE SEA

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Reams have been written about various fish, both from a sporting and nutritional standpoint, but seldom do you see anything regarding that illustrious species of fish, the cod, along with the immediate members of its family, the haddock, pollock, hake, and cusk, all popularly designated as "groundfish." The cod has been termed by some, "The Beef of the Sea." From a nutritional standpoint it might well deserve this title since it contains an amount of protein pound for pound equivalent to beef, besides essential minerals, vitamins, and fat.

As cattle or beef are perhaps the greatest source of meat from our land producing areas, so was the cod our greatest source of food from the sea for many years. Granted that it does not hold this position now with salmon, tuna, rosefish, and several other species being caught in greater volume today, but historical books and pamphlets indicate that the fishing industry of the United States developed around the cod.

A Factor in New England History

Just as it is the main ingredient of that delicious cod chowder or those light golden brown cod cakes, so has it been one of the main factors in shaping the history of this country. Indeed! John Quincy Adams in speaking of the value of cod to the New England States declared, "They were to us what wool was to England, or tobacco to Virginia--the great staple which became the basis of power and wealth." The "Codfish Aristocracy" preceded both the "Merchant Princes" and the "Lords of the Loom." And what fish has ever had tribute paid to it by any state as has the cod by the State of Massachusetts! In the Hall of Representatives in Boston hangs a wooden cod "as a memorial of the importance of the Cod Fishery to the Welfare of this Commonwealth," according to a resolution passed in 1784. On March 7, 1895, a report from a Committee of the Massachusetts House of Representatives investigating the desirability of transferring this "representation of a codfish which for more than a hundred years has never missed a roll call" to the new chamber in the State House extension stated in part:

"Poised high aloft in the old hall of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, riding serenely the sound waves of debate, unperturbed by the ebb and flow of enactment and repeal or the desultory storms that vexed the nether depths of oratory, there has hung through immemorial years an ancient codfish, quaintly wrought in wood and painted to the life. . .it tells of commerce, war, diplomacy, of victories won by Massachusetts in all three fields."

Years before, the Massachusetts statesmen had decided to make public acknowledgment of the indebtedness of the Massachusetts Colony to the cod, and had voted to adorn the assembly chamber with a wooden representation thereof, and individuals and private corporations paid tribute to the cod and vied with one another to make the recognition as conspicuous as possible. As early as 1661 the cod appeared upon the corporate seal of the Plymouth Land Company, proprietors of lands on the Kennebec River in Maine. In 1743 Colonel Benjamin Pickman of Salem, who was one of the most prominent men of the Massachusetts Colony built the Mansion House in Salem and decorated the ends of every stair in his spacious hall with a carved and gilded cod. Some of the newspapers or journals of the day recognized it. On the front page of the Salem Gazette for 1768 appears a coat of arms, consisting of a shield, supported by two Indians, and bearing the dove and olive branch. The crest above this shield is an unmistakable cod.

Other innumerable instances of the early importance of the cod could be cited, such as its portrayal on currency and revenue stamps of the early colonies. Nova Scotian bank notes also portrayed it with the legend, "Success to the Fisheries," and it was shown on the early postage stamps of Newfoundland, where the courts have held that whenever the word "fish" is unqualified, it must be taken to mean cod.

Distribution Through the Oceans

The cod provides the basis for one of the most truly international fisheries. In the Atlantic, it is found from New Jersey northward to the waters around Greenland, and in waters along the European coast, south to the Bay of Biscay. In the Pacific, it is caught off the Coast of Washington, northward through the Bering Sea, and east to the Sea of Okhotsk, bordering Siberia and Japan. It has been exploited for many years by fishermen from numerous American, European, and Asiatic countries. As an example, during the forty year period from 1896 to 1935, the combined annual cod catch of Newfoundland, Canada, France, the United States, and Portugal, in the western north Atlantic, averaged more than a billion pounds, of which United States vessels took a yearly average of 130 million pounds. Our cod catches come mainly from Banquereau and Georges Banks, off the coasts of New England and Nova Scotia, but frozen cod fillets and salted cod are imported from several foreign countries, so that cod from almost every bank and ledge of the inshore and offshore fishery grounds of the North Atlantic pass through our ports to the tables of people all over the United States. In the Pacific side, our domestic cod fishery is much smaller and limited primarily to salted cod products brought south from the Bering Sea regions.

Prolific Reproduction

The long and continuous exploitation of cod might well raise the question as to the reason for its continued abundance. Nature has provided for this by rendering the cod very prolific. A good sized female cod may contain several million eggs. (One authority has ventured the opinion that if every egg shed each year by every fish were able to develop into a mature cod, it would take only a few years to pack the seas of all the world so tight with cod that there would be no room for any more. But this will never happen, since the eggs, which are about one-sixteenth of an inch in diameter, float at the mercy of the birds,

other fish, and the danger of being cast ashore.) Upon hatching, the egg becomes a tiny transparent fly only a fraction of an inch long virtually all head and eyes, attached to the diminishing yolk of its egg. Soon it begins to feed for itself. When the young cod attains a length of approximately an inch, it seeks the bottom, and its migrations thereafter are largely influenced by changes in the water temperature for the cod is a cold water fish.

The cod will apparently eat most anything and everything the sea has to offer. While crustaceans, mollusks, fish and worms appear to be its main diet, such articles as stones, jewelry, glass, and leather, have been found in its stomach. An interesting sidelight on their voracity is given in Captain Cartwright and His Labrador Journal. Cartwright wrote on July 19, 1776: "Observing many codfish to come close in to the shore where the water was deep, I laid myself flat upon the rock took a caplin* by the tail, and held it in the water in expectation that the cod would take it out of my fingers; nor was I disappointed, for almost instantly a fish struck at, and seized it, and no sooner had one snatched away at the caplin, than another sprang out of the water at my hand, which I had not withdrawn, and actually caught a slight hold of my finger and thumb. Had I dipped my hand in the water, I am convinced they would soon have made me repent my folly..."

Methods of Fishery

After a cod has attained a sufficient length to interest fishermen, there are a number of methods by which it is caught. Otter-trawls -- those big, flattened, conical bags which are dragged slowly along the bottom of the sea gathering in the fish that come into their paths, are employed by the larger vessels or trawlers. If you have wondered what the word "otter" has to do with it -- a board, termed an "otter-board" is attached to each of the two towing cables so that, as the trawl is dragged along the bottom, the resistance of the water causes the boards to pull away from each other, keeping the mouth of the net open. The otter trawl makes the fishermen independent of the fishes' appetite which is the bane of the smaller boats employing baited hand and trawl lines. Hand lines with one or two bait hooks are familiar to all who have ever fished. Each unit of trawl or ground line may be as much as one-quarter mile long and support 400-500 hooks from short lines attached to it. In some seasons of the year, gill nets are also employed in catching cod.

Adult Appearance

In case you are curious as to what the adult fish looks like, it is distinguished by its three large dorsal fins above and two large anal fins below, its lack of spines, the ventral fins well forward of the pectorals, a heavy body, large head, with a prominent "whisker" or barbel under the lower jaw, nearly square tail, with wide mouth. In color, the cod ranges from gray to red through a wide scale. It is generally thickly speckled with small, round, vaguely edged spots, except on the under side. As to size, one of the largest cod ever recorded was more than six feet long and weighed $211\frac{1}{4}$ pounds, but fish weighing more than seventy-five pounds are comparatively rare.

*Caplin--a small subarctic species of fish.

BAKED STUFFED COD FILLETS

2 one-pound cod fillets	bread stuffing
1 teaspoon salt	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter or other fat
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper	2 slices bacon

Sprinkle both sides of fillets with salt and pepper. Place one fillet in a well greased baking pan. Place stuffing on the fillet, and cover with the remaining fillet. Fasten together with toothpicks or skewers. Brush top with melted fat, and lay slices of bacon on top. Bake in a moderate oven, 350 degrees F. for about 30 to 40 minutes. Remove carefully to a hot platter and take out fasteners. Garnish and serve immediately with a sauce. Makes 6 servings.

COD CHOWDER

2 pounds cod fillets	2 cups potatoes, diced
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup bacon, diced	$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup onions, diced	dash pepper
2 cups hot water	4 cups rich milk

Cut fillets in 1 inch cubes. Fry bacon until crisp and golden brown. Add onion and slightly brown. Add water and potatoes and cook 10 minutes, or until potatoes are practically done. Then add cod, and cook until it can be separated into large flakes with fork. Add remaining ingredients and heat. Sprinkle top with chopped parsley. Makes 6 servings.

OVEN FRIED COD FILLETS

2 pounds cod fillets	1 cup bread crumbs
1 tablespoon salt	4 tablespoons butter or other fat
1 cup milk	

Cut fillets into serving size portions. Add salt to milk. Dip the fish into the milk, and roll in crumbs; place in a well greased baking pan. Sprinkle each piece of cod with melted fat. Bake in very hot oven, 350 degrees F. for 10 minutes. Serve at once with a sauce. Makes 6 servings.

TARTAR SAUCE

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup mayonnaise	1 tablespoon onion, minced
1 tablespoon sweet pickle, chopped	1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
	1 tablespoon olives, chopped

Mix all ingredients thoroughly and chill.

COD CAKES

1 Pound dried salt cod	1 tablespoon onion, grated
2 cups mashed potatoes	1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
1 egg	dash pepper

Cover cod with cold water and freshen over night. Drain, and flake the cod, removing any bones or skin. Mix the cod, potatoes, beaten egg and seasonings together. Form into cakes and fry in hot fat. When cakes are a golden brown on one side, turn carefully and brown the other side.

Cooking time about 8 minutes. Drain on absorbent paper. Serve immediately with a sauce. Makes 6 servings.

COD COCKTAIL

1½ cups flaked cod	3 tablespoons celery, chopped fine
¾ cup tomato catsup	1/3 teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons lemon juice	6 drops Tabasco Sauce

Mix the last five ingredients together to make a sauce. Chill. Place lettuce leaf in the bottom of each cocktail glass. Place 1 teaspoon of sauce on the lettuce leaf. Add ¼ cup of flaked cod, and cover with additional sauce. Makes 6 servings.

BREAD STUFFING

3 tablespoons butter or other fat	½ teaspoon thyme or savory seasoning
2 tablespoons onion, chopped	
1/3 cup celery, chopped	¼ teaspoon salt
2 cups day old bread crumbs	dash pepper

Cook onion and celery in melted fat for about 10 minutes, stirring constantly. Add to the bread crumbs; add seasonings and mix well. If stuffing seems too dry, add a little warm water.

LEMON PARSLEY SAUCE

4 tablespoons butter	1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped	

Melt butter; add lemon juice and parsley. Serve hot with baked or broiled fish.

STEAMED COD

2 pounds cod fillets	1 teaspoon salt
1 cup boiling water	

Sprinkle both sides of fillets with salt. Place fillets on rack with water in cooker. Place cover on cooker, and allow steam to flow from vent pipe to release all air from cooker. Steam 8 minutes at 15 pounds pressure. Let pressure return to zero. Serve hot with a rich, bright colored sauce, or flake and use in cocktails, salads, or other recipes calling for flaked or canned cod. Makes 6 servings.

EGG SAUCE

2 tablespoons butter	3 hard cooked eggs
2 tablespoons flour	¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup hot milk	dash pepper

Melt butter and blend in flour. Add the milk gradually stirring constantly, and cook until thick and smooth. Chop the hard cooked eggs, saving one yolk for garnishing. Add chopped eggs and seasonings. Serve hot over boiled or steamed fish.

BOILED COD

2 pounds cod fillets

2 quarts water

2 tablespoons salt

Place fillets on a plate and tie plate containing the fillets in a piece of cheese cloth. Lower the plate into boiling salted water and simmer for 10 minutes; remove plate containing the fillets and drain. Remove the fillets carefully to a hot platter and serve with an Egg Sauce. Makes 6 servings.

Boiled cod fillets may be flaked and used in cocktails, salads or other recipes calling for flaked or canned cod.

COD SALAD

2 cups flaked cod

4 eggs, hard cooked

1 cup celery, chopped

1 tablespoon lemon juice

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sweet pickle, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup mayonnaise

Mix all ingredients together lightly. Chill. Serve on lettuce leaves garnished with slices of egg. Makes 6 servings.

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