

On Eating Shrimp, and Some Other Matters

Except in the metaphorical, derogatory sense ("a little shrimp of a man"), which, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was being used as early as the 14th century by Chaucer, shrimp has not made much impress on English literature.

The minor poet, Michael Drayton (1563-1631) mentions the seafood in his magnum opus, *Poly-Olbion*, an immensely long versified guidebook to Jacobean England:

The Scallop cordiall judgd, the dainty Wilk and Limp, The Periwinkle, Prawne, the Cockle, and the Shrimpe. For wanton womens tastes, or for weake stomachs bought.

Shrimp is so universally popular that there must be literally thousands of recipes for its use. My own favorite contains one ingredient that I believe may be unique.

In the old days, in New Orleans, the recipe went like this:

A lot of fresh shrimp from the French Market.
Tap water.
Salt.
A bay leaf or two.
Cloves.
Other spices, according to the cook's whim.
One copy of yesterday's *New Orleans Times-Picayune*.

I have forgotten just how the shrimp was cooked: whether it was thrown brusquely into boiling water or eased into cold water that was then brought to a boil: I seem to remember two antagonistic schools of thought about this.

When the shrimp were properly pink and done, it was served on a table spread with the *Times-Picayune* and the banquet was eaten, of course, with the fingers. The only accompaniments consisted of long warm loaves of French bread, butter, hot sauce for the few not content with the incomparable flavor of the shrimp itself, and icy beer. It would be ungentlemanly to state that there were "wanton women" present, but of "weake stomachs" there were none, for the rule of thumb was to buy about twice as much shrimp as one

thought the specified number of guests could eat, and none ever went to waste.

In memory, at least, the bottom layer of the shrimp was the best of all, for the printer's ink of the *Times-Picayune* had not only stained the crisp shells but also permeated them and given to the shrimp itself a flavor most unusual.

One supposes that in the decades since those days, advances in printing technology have come up with an ink faster-drying and less penetrating. I rather hope not: *Times-Picayune*-flavored shrimp had a tang that was subtle and unique.

Every profession and trade, from the most exalted to the lowliest, has its own jargon. Marketing is no exception. I have been reading about "institutional" markets for a good many years and thought the term rather forbidding—bringing to mind standing in chow lines in the Army—until, in the preparation of this number of *Marine Fisheries Review*, I discovered it included restaurants. Now some restaurants are institutions in the common and more laudatory sense of the word, but it had not occurred to me that to our Marketing people they were a part of the "institutional" market. Makes it seem less formidable, somehow.

What is the most expensive edible fisheries product in the world? At my supermarket, Iranian caviar is selling for about a dime a gram, or over \$40 a pound. As an upcoming *Marine Fisheries Review* article will show, in Japan elvers (eel larvae) can sometimes command hundreds of dollars a pound. Descending from these astronomical figures, one still finds some fairly high prices: it is not extraordinary, in Hawaii, toward New Year's, to pay \$10 a pound for fresh tuna for sashimi. And as C. R. Mock points out in his article in this number, live shrimp for the tempura market in Japan regularly bring \$10 or \$15 a pound. Of course, one non-edible fisheries product has them all beat. High-quality cultured 8.5 millimeter

pearls, made into necklaces, come to a cool \$40,000 a pound or so.

With this number of *Marine Fisheries Review*, the publication has been moved to Seattle, where it joins the group of NMFS scientific publications, including the *Fishery Bulletin* and *Marine Fisheries Abstracts*, put out there by the NMFS Scientific Publications Staff. *Marine Fisheries Review* is in its 35th year of publication. It has always had a wide readership among the many constituencies that comprise the "fisheries audience." As in the past, it will continue to bring news notes and formal scientific articles dealing with the fisheries. It will be a medium for presenting fishery information in more detail, and usually more technically, than is possible in the dailies and the trade press. It will publish papers longer than can be accommodated in the latter. George B. Gross's fine paper on the shrimp fisheries of Latin America, in this number, is an example.

From time to time, a number of *Marine Fisheries Review* will be devoted to a single topic, as this one is to shrimp.

One new feature of *Marine Fisheries Review* will be a section called "Research Notes." This section will consist of short scientific papers announcing preliminary results of investigations which the authors wish to place upon the record as soon as possible. Reuben Lasker, NMFS Scientific Editor, has volunteered to serve as editor of this section. The papers will be refereed by experts. We hope to provide the authors with publication within about two months of acceptance.

A large number of people, both inside and outside of NMFS, have had a hand in the preparation of this number of *Marine Fisheries Review*. They have worked at short notice and with impossible deadlines—which they have somehow managed to meet. The list is too long to name them all, but I would like particularly to mention two former editors of *Marine Fisheries Review* for whose cooperation, courtesy, and good suggestions I am most grateful. They are Joseph E. Pileggi and Edward Edelsberg. I thank them both.

T.A.M.

NOTE

As this number of Marine Fisheries Review was being prepared, final estimates for 1972 shrimp landings and values were not complete. Thus the figures reported for 1972 landings and values may not agree. The percentage differences will be found to be quite small.

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