

A Labor Day Weekend Redux

I lied earlier about my September 22nd column being the last one for 2006. I was to have gone out fishing as a guest of Fenway Painters on Labor Day Weekend, but bad weather caused us to postpone the trip. We finally went out last Sunday on the Sundance II out of Salisbury and it was a trip worth writing about.

I arrived at the dock at about 6:15 AM and marveled at the sunrise: streams of misty orange were working through a swirling fog over the river – it was a sight to behold. Captain Tom Grady then set sail at 7:00 and our first adventure was at the mouth of the Merrimack, where 4-6 foot rollers were meeting the outgoing tide and creating, as my mother-in-law would say, “very spicy” conditions. We worked through the inlet and headed out to Jeffrey’s Ledge.

About two hours into our 3-hour trip, we heard Captain Tom announce that we should watch the ocean on the starboard side. I could not believe my eyes, as a half mile’s worth of giant tuna were boiling the seas right next to us – and me without my tuna gear.

We arrived at Jeffrey’s Ledge at around 10:00 after a warning from the captain that dogfish were blanketing the area and that we should be prepared for some tough fishing. The dogfish were there, in force. First I stopped baiting the upper hook, then I removed the colorful tubes on the hooks, finally I had one hook right at the sinker level. – but not until I had hauled in five doggies. Everyone was pulling in the dogfish and it was very difficult to get through to the more desirable species – haddock, mostly. Some haddock (and cod) were even coming up half-eaten by the pesky dogs.

We had figured it out by mid-day, but the day was mostly over. I wound up with 5 dogfish, 7 cusk, 3 haddock (one keeper), and one undersized codfish. I gave the cusk away and returned home with one haddock for Monday’s dinner. All in all, it was a thoroughly enjoyable – albeit frustrating – day offshore.

I had forgotten to give you a great recipe for pollock fishcakes, so here it is folks:

(Based on one pound of pollock, or other white fish)

- Remove any dark meat from the fish fillets, and then cut the fillets into ¼ inch pieces.
- In a small bowl, mix one egg with a tablespoon or two of milk and your favorite spices, such as salt, pepper, and thyme.
- Mix the egg mixture with the fish.
- Add instant potato mix slowly to the fish mixture until you have the right consistency for fishcakes
- Divide into four or so fishcakes and sauté ten minutes on each side

See you next year!