

SEAFOOD

“That looks like just the thing” said son Allan pointing to a sign that said 50 OYSTERS \$75.

It was July 4 this year and Valerie and I were in Charlottetown P.E.I. It was my birthday and we had just checked into our Hotel room and were sipping champagne ordered for us by friends in Milford when a knock sounded on the door. I opened it and was struck speechless (yes it can happen but not too often) to see son Allan and daughter Ann standing in the hall. They had flown down from Toronto to take us out for dinner and would fly home after breakfast the next day. We knew nothing of this planned visit hence our speechlessness. They wanted oysters before dinner hence the sign.

We were served 50 oysters, 10 each of 5 different types, by a young man who has been International Shucking Champion for 3 years. They were great and both kids loved them. I often brought oysters home from the St. Lawrence Market along with other seafood when they were young so they were used to eating various esoterica from the sea.

I suppose I developed a real love for fish and fishing when the family moved to Midland Ontario when I was 12 years old. I used to go fishing with some school chums and would bring home my “catch” which Mom would prepare. I think she and I were the fondest of fish in the family. We both loved catfish but Mom wouldn’t clean them since I had to skin them with pliers. She didn’t like the fierce look of them either but we both agreed they were the sweetest eating. Our second favourite was Perch although they were often quite small. I did catch some good size Pike but they weren’t as tasty.

I took the kids to Minden one summer, to a cottage in a small park like setting with 10 or 12 other cottages. One day Allan mentioned that he and a boy in the next cottage had rowed to the end of the lake and it was teeming with frogs. I made a deal to pay them 25 cents a frog but they must be alive when they got back to camp. Later that afternoon they arrived with a bag of frogs, all alive and I proceeded to dispatch them on a bench behind the “fish house”, remove and skin their back legs. A small crowd of other cottagers gathered to watch and make sundry comments which I ignored.

That night I cooked the legs for our supper, i.e. rolled them in flour and fried them in butter. After supper I sent Allan

to the cottage of one of the more outspoken watchers with several cooked frogs legs for him to try. The next day he, somewhat sheepishly, met me on the road and said “If I pay your son and his friend to catch some frogs for me would you do the, you know, so I could cook the legs?” Which we did.

When we used to go to Florida for the winter there was a small town a little south of Titusville that held an annual Frogs Leg Festival and we visited several times and ate lots of frog’s legs. In the mid 80’s a restaurant Le Grenouille (the frog) opened in Toronto featuring frog’s legs and we went several times but we found that the delicate flavour was often overpowered by the strong sauces they used. As if knowing my likes No Frills has had frozen frog’s legs available for several weeks. They’re not quite as good as freshly dispatched but very acceptable none the less.

One of my other favourite sea foods is squid, okay feel better and call it calamari. I used to pick them up fresh at the Market and clean and cook them. I can hear some of you saying “But it’s like eating rubber bands”. Sadly that is sometimes the case because overcooking i.e. more than 2 or 3 minutes will cause the squid to go rubbery. There’s the 2 or 22 minute rule however, if you cook them more than 2 minutes and they go rubbery keep on cooking them for another 20 minutes and they will again be tender. Now I have never had to test that rule but those that have assured me it works.

For those of you who are now dying to have beautifully cooked calamari go to Paulo’s or the Funky Carp in Belleville. They’re on their appetizer menu and both are good and not rubbery.

When we lived in Caledon I would often, on a Sunday morning, go down to the Credit River, which flowed through the Village and catch some small rainbow trout. I used a fly rod and barbless hooks so sometimes I came home empty handed but usually I had two which daughter Ann and I would eat for breakfast.

I must say that its easier to get fresh sea food now than it was when we moved to Milford. The A&P in Picton gets a reasonable supply of mussels and fresh fish every week but the A&P on North Front St. has an excellent seafood counter with mussels, oysters, clams, fresh fish and other seafood dishes and salads and we often shop there.

Our trip through the Maritimes this year reminded us of how wonderful well prepared seafood tastes and why it

Continued on page 8