



# A Question of Taste

By Hillary Keating Callaghan

## Harvest of the sea—last of the hunted

"The last of the hunted things." The phrase conjured up the wild Zulu chase scene in Raiders of the Lost Ark. The "hunted things" referred to in this context, however, were less exotic. It was fish that were being discussed.

Mike Davidson, a partner in the Western Fish Company, was explaining that most people fail to realize that the fish business is not a commodity market. Unlike cattle, fish cannot be penned or forced. They spawn in the open waters of lakes, rivers, streams or oceans. Their ranks are thinned by other, predatory fish or sea lions and by the vagaries of weather. Even if a catch is generous, severe winter weather can prevent the fish from ever reaching market.

Fish may be caught by Indians in, for example, the Northwest Territory. They are gutted there by the Indians, shipped to Winnipeg, graded and loaded onto trucks bound for various U.S. cities.

If the roads are impassable, transport halts since the margin of profit is too small to allow for air freight.

hand, Mike chose instead the less familiar perils of fish wholesaling. He worked for Western and as a buyer for the Washington Fish and Oyster Company, and Pacific Pearl, whose Wakefield label signals quality frozen crab in local grocery stores.

What Western has to offer, in part, are the best fresh fish from the waters of the Pacific Northwest. Advances in air transport, particularly over the past five years, have made it possible for customers here to enjoy seafood as fresh as that enjoyed by those who live along the shores of the Pacific.

Closer to home, Western Fish enjoys a special relationship with the packers along Lake Erie, enabling them to offer their customers a reliable supply of such items as Lake Erie perch (unique in character and quality) and pickerel. Mike ventured the guess that Lake Erie is the most active of the Great Lakes, from which millions of pounds of fish are harvested.

We sometimes overlook the bounty of our Great Lakes when we focus on such Pacific Northwest delicacies as the King or Sockeye Salmon, with their brilliant color and distinctive flavor.

variety of fish (except shellfish or crustaceans) regardless of the method of cooking — poach ing, sauteing, frying, baking (450-degrees), or broiling.

James Beard swears this method is fool-proof. If you prefer to live a little more dangerously, you could make your own mayonnaise or Hollandaise sauce to accompany your perfectly cooked fish.

If not, some fresh butter, sour cream or a good olive oil would equally enhance you catch.

### COLD POACHED SALMON

Poach the salmon in a highly spiced court bouillon. It is wise to use a cheesecloth or cotton wrapper for the fish so that you can lift it from the boiler without breaking it. When the fish is done remove it from the bouillon and set the bouillon aside to cool. While the fish is cooling, carefully remove the skin and trim the fish so that it looks inviting.

If you are serving a whole fish, you may want to leave the head and tail on it. This gives it a classical appearance. Arrange your fish on a large platter and garnish with sliced cucumbers, tiny or sliced tomatoes, greens — parsley or masses of watercress — and thin slices of lemon with scalloped edges or cut into any fancy shapes you wish.

Serve the salmon with any of these sauces: Mayonnaise, Remoulade, Gribiche, Verte, Tartar, or vinaigrette.

Cucumber salad is the traditional accompaniment, and a salad of string beans in vinaigrette sauce garnished with tiny artichoke hearts is another excellent addition.

1 quart white wine  
1 cup wine vinegar  
3 onions  
9 cloves  
4 carrots, finely cut  
2 stalks celery  
1 bay leaf  
1 tsp. thyme  
1 to 5 sprigs parsley  
1 tsp. salt

Put 3 cloves in each onion. Combine all ingredients and bring to a boil. Simmer for an hour before adding the fish. (from "James Beard's New Fish Cookery")

### FISH KEBABS

4 servings  
1/2 cup lemon juice  
2 tbsp. oil  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/4 tsp. pepper  
1/4 tsp. dill  
2 tbsp. chopped parsley  
1 1/2 lbs. fresh filets (flounder, haddock or any white fish)  
1/4 lb. medium-size whole mushrooms (approximately 3 cups)  
1 green pepper, seeded and cut into 1-inch pieces  
2 onions, cut into wedges or quarters (depending on size)  
1 medium-size zucchini, cut into 1-inch chunks

Mix together lemon juice, oil, salt, pepper, dill and parsley. Cut fish into 1 1/2-inch cubes and marinate in lemon juice mixture for approximately 1 hour. Drain and place the fish on four skewers, alternating with mushrooms, pepper, onion and zucchini. Brush the kebabs with marinade and broil 3 or 4 inches from the heat for 5 minutes. Then, brush again with marinade and broil 10 minutes longer. (from "Rodale's Naturally Great Foods Cookbook" by Nancy Albright)

ALTHOUGH IT IS not a business that would appeal to everyone, Mike Davidson rhapsodizes about the romance of fish distribution. Perhaps it is the fact that the business is so uncertain, fish "hunting" so fraught with risks and hazards that it has a perverse appeal.

Mike says that the nature of the wholesale fish business keeps you humble. You never know if you will have fish next week.

It is probably this same uncertainty that keeps others out of the business. A recent convention of the National Fisheries Institute in San Francisco was attended by only 2,000 delegates, a number representing the entire nation.

In the greater Detroit area there are only about a half dozen wholesale fish distributors. The eastern Fish Company deals in premium quality fish, supplying five states. Locally, their customers include such elite establishments as Joe Muer's Restaurant, Machus restaurant, the Kingsley Inn, the Bijou, the Detroit Plaza and at least 100 Oriental restaurants. They also distribute to Pomeroy's Fish Market, Hollywood Markets, the Holiday Market of Royal Oak, Shopping Center Markets and the major grocery chains.

MIKE DAVIDSON must have an appreciation for high quality in his blood. His father, until recently, was owner of the prestigious women's store, Davidson's, in Birmingham.

Having experienced the perils of the retail clothing industry close at

WHATEVER one's preferences — for ocean seafood, packed in ice and flown to Detroit in a matter of hours or picked directly from local lakes and rivers — summer is a perfect time to share in the romance of fish — without the risks. Barbequed on an outdoor grill, it is lighter and more suited to delicate summer appetites than steak.

Low in calories and cholesterol, it is the ideal diet food for a season in which every bulge is unkindly displayed. Poached in a well-seasoned stock, it makes a tasty, substantial entrée without having to turn the oven on.

Even baked, fish cooks so quickly that the oven would barely have time to add to the heat of the day.

This last point is not only a pleasant bonus on a hot day but is absolutely essential in the preparation of fish — it must not be overcooked or it will be dry and tasteless. While lengthy cooking breaks down the connective tissue in beef, tenderizing it, fish should be cooked quickly to avoid breaking the tissues down.

In his book "New Fish Cookery," James Beard gives a rule for determining cooking time which is beautiful in its simplicity. It was arrived at by the Department of Fisheries of Canada after extensive testing. The rule states that a fish should be measured at its thickest point (depth, not across) and cooked at exactly 10 minutes per inch.

This applies to any cut of any

### COURT BOUILLON FOR COLD FISH DISHES

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3 quarts water

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