

# For Some, 'Calabash Style' Means Catch Your Own Fish

BY TERRY POPE

There are several businesses along Restaurant Row in Calabash that offer no "All-You-Can-Eat Buffets" or even "Seafood Deluxe Platters." They hand you a hook-and-line and tell you to catch your own while riding the waves about ten miles offshore.

In the "Seafood Capital of the World," you know times are changing when even the most inexperienced fisherman can board a charter fishing vessel in search for the "big one."

For years, boats docking along the Calabash River have brought fresh seafood to the visitor. Now those boats are taking the visitor to the sea, and for some fishermen the trips are changing the meaning of seafood "Calabash Style."

There are two charter fishing and scenic cruise boats serving the docks at Calabash, the "Capt. Jim" and the "Capt. Sam." On one recent half-day deep sea fishing trip, it was determined that a good fisherman doesn't necessarily need experience. Luck can also play a role.



FOR C.O. BUNGENER of Calabash, seafood "Calabash Style" means catching sea bass two-at-a-time offshore.

Chuck Gruesbeck and Jimmy Bell are natives of Charlotte. They are both teenagers who are vacationing in Brunswick County with their parents.

For Jimmy, it is his first time at sea. For Chuck, it is his second offshore fishing trip aboard the "Capt. Jim" in Calabash. He talked his friend into taking the trip this summer so the two could catch a string of black sea bass for supper.

C.O. Bungener and his wife, Jetsy, live in Calabash, virtually surrounded by seafood restaurants of every type imaginable. Yet, they have taken the trip on a number of occasions to catch their own fresh seafood.

The Bungeners, with their previous fishing experience securely under their belts, are at the stern of the "Capt. Jim" while the two teenagers, wrapped in their youthful excitement, are at the port. Between these two couples are a whole row of fishermen, each one holding a rod and reel of the same size, shape and color, and each one reeling in black sea bass, occasionally two-at-a-time.

The fishermen may have different levels of fishing experience, but to the sea bass one dangling tackle about 45 feet below the bottom of the boat just looks like another. The bass are hooked and reeled in by the fishermen and taken off the hook by mates who also keep the fishermen stocked with bait and tackle.

When the sign says, "A family type fishing trip for the first time fisherman as well as the inexperienced fisherman," believe it. These fish are not choosy when it comes to biting tackle.

"Sometimes you get some silver snapper, or some grouper once in a while," said Capt. Jimmy Stevens. "But 90 percent of what you catch out there will be black sea bass. We don't say you'll catch other types of fish because we don't want to disappoint anyone. But sometimes you'll catch four or five silver snapper a trip."

On this half-day trip in June, the fishermen were filling their baskets with black sea bass and small ladyfish, a pretty little bottom dweller that is also called the banana fish because of its bright yellow spots on the dorsal fin. They are both good fish for eating.

On this fishing trip, Capt. Stevens traveled about ten miles offshore, using his Loran readings and depth finders to determine where the bot-

tom dwelling fish were located. A northeastern wind kept the sea a little rough, but despite the seasickness several fishermen experienced, the catch was good.

In addition to half or all-day fishing trips, both Calabash boats also take a waterway sunset cruise in the evenings for those wishing to sail down the Calabash River and for 20 minutes in the Atlantic Ocean. There is no fishing involved, just a tour of the scenery, the Little River jetties and the lights from Cherry Grove, S.C.

The docks at Calabash are no longer just a place where diners eat and run. Some folks are choosing to catch their own and to spend more time in and around the waters of Calabash.



STAFF PHOTOS BY TERRY POPE

CHUCK GRUESBECK of Charlotte caught this nice black sea bass while fishing aboard the "Capt. Jim."



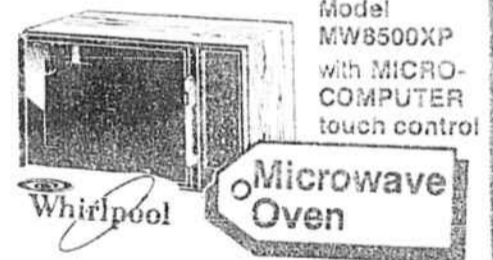
JETSY BUNGENER of Calabash works on filling a basket with sea bass and ladyfish during a recent half-day fishing trip off the coast of Calabash.

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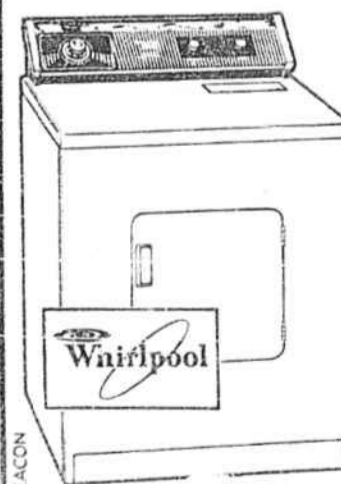
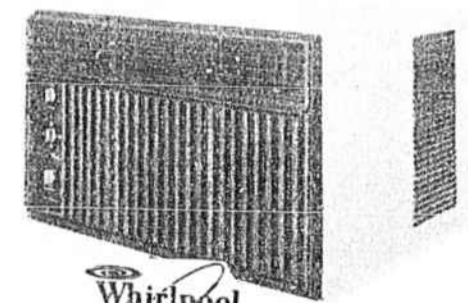
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