

New Farm Crops Are Seafood Treats

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

Crawfish and Catfish, two delicacies of the sea that are gaining in popularity along the coast, are now farmed right here in Brunswick County. You can select your dinner entree from a local farm as easily as the head of lettuce from the supermarket.

Farmed on a large scale in Louisiana, both fish are now raised in North Carolina as well. There are a handful of Brunswick County farms where the two are being harvested.

Crawfish are the lesser known. These hardy crustaceans resemble shrimp, but have their own distinctive taste. Measuring from 3½ to 7 inches long, only their tails are eaten, so it takes about seven pounds of whole crawfish to yield a pound of meat. They are high in protein, low in calories and fat.

Catfish, on the other hand, though unglamorous scavengers, have been a staple on our tables. Nowadays, they're a national favorite and increasingly raised in ponds. While yesterday's catfish seemed oily in taste, today's has a new, mild-flavored image, perhaps because of being fed a grain diet "down on the farm." Flaky and moist, the moderately lean catfish can be substituted for most white-fleshed fish in recipes.

Best of all, we have access to exceptional recipes for these and many other fish. A recipe newsletter, *Mariner's Menu*, published by the University of North Carolina Sea Grant College Program, offers monthly collections of such recipes that have been carefully tested for taste and nutrition. The following recipes are from this publication.

Is blackened fish your dish when eating out? You can do it at home with ease, using this *Mariner's Menu* formula:

Blackened Catfish

6 catfish fillets
6 T margarine

Seasoning mix:

1 T paprika
1 t onion powder
1 t garlic powder
1 t cayenne pepper
1½ t ground pepper
½ t dried thyme
½ t dried oregano

Combine seasoning mix in shallow dish. Melt margarine in another shallow dish. Dip each fillet in melted margarine to coat both sides.

Heat a large cast iron skillet over very high heat until it is beyond the smoking stage and there is a white ash in the bottom. This will take at least ten minutes. Place fillets in a single layer in the skillet. Cook, uncovered, over the same high heat until the bottom of each fillet is charred, about two minutes. Turn and cook on the other side until done, about two minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Remove from pan. Serves 6.

Note: If you don't have a good exhaust fan when blackening fish, cook it outdoors.

If you can't get to New Orleans often, you can catch the flavor with this gumbo recipe:

Catfish Gumbo Supreme

4 medium catfish fillets
¼ C vegetable oil
1 C coarsely chopped celery
¼ C chopped green onions, including tops
¼ C chopped onion
4 t minced garlic
4 C chicken broth
2 16-oz. can tomatoes, chopped, undrained
½ t thyme
1 small bay leaf

½ t cayenne pepper
½ t oregano
1 t salt
2 boxes frozen sliced okra
Cut fillets into one-inch pieces and set aside.

Heat oil in large pot over medium heat. Lightly saute celery, green onions, onion and garlic. Add broth, tomatoes, thyme, bay leaf, cayenne, oregano and salt. Bring to boil and add okra. Cover and simmer 30 minutes. Add catfish and simmer ten minutes or until fish flakes easily. Remove bay leaf. Serves 8 to 10.

Crawfish versatility is exemplified by the following two recipes. First we have the popular casserole, in which these distinctive fish will shine.

Crawfish Etouffe

1 pound crawfish tails
1 t salt
¼ t ground pepper
¼ t cayenne pepper
¼ pounds margarine
2 T flour
¼ C finely chopped celery
2 C finely chopped onion

¼ C finely chopped green pepper
2 t finely chopped garlic
¼ C water
2 T finely chopped green onion tops
2 T finely chopped fresh parsley
¼ C dry white wine
cooked rice

Season crawfish tails with salt and black pepper. Set aside. Melt margarine in heavy pot over medium heat. Add flour and cook until light brown. Add cayenne, celery, onion, green pepper and garlic. Cook, stirring often, until vegetables are tender, but not brown. Add crawfish tails and saute until just tender, about 15 minutes. Add water and green onion tops. Bring to boil and simmer for five minutes. Add parsley and wine. Simmer five minutes more. Check seasoning and let set a few minutes. Serve over cooked rice. Serves 4.

Crawfish Casserole

1½ pounds crawfish tails
1½ T margarine
¼ C sliced fresh mushrooms
¼ C finely chopped onion

¼ C canned tomatoes, drained and chopped

1 T flour
¼ C evaporated skim milk
2 T dry sherry
¼ t Worcestershire sauce
¼ t Tabasco sauce
1 t salt
¼ t ground pepper
¼ C dry bread crumbs
2 T margarine, melted

Melt 1½ T margarine in large skillet over medium heat. Saute mushrooms until tender. Add onion and tomatoes. Cook for ten minutes. Stir in flour. Gradually add milk, stirring constantly. Add sherry, Worcestershire, Tabasco, salt and pepper. Mix well. Add crawfish tails and mix well. Place in lightly greased two-quart casserole.

Mix bread crumbs with 2 T margarine and sprinkle over casserole. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes or until bubbly and browned. Serves 6.

Now try a more cosmopolitan dish. The French word "etouffe" means "smothered in." The whole recipe means "mouth-watering."

the HARBORAGE AT BENTTREE PLANTATION



Luxury condominiums directly on the Intracoastal Waterway. Private boat ramp and dockage, plus pool, tennis courts and waterfront clubhouse. Two and three bedroom units available, featuring panoramic views and lots of decking.

No homeowners' fees for 2 years!
SPECIAL PRICING INCENTIVES
IF PURCHASED BY JUNE 1.

sloane
reality  REALTOR

CAUSEWAY
OCEAN ISLE BEACH
579-6216
579-6217



beach café

SEAFOOD ★ PRIME RIB

\$1.00

OFF
WITH COUPON
Reg. \$8.95

CALABASH

SEAFOOD BUFFET

OPEN
FRI & SAT
NIGHTS



• Large Steamed Shrimp • Cold Boiled Shrimp • Golden Fried Shrimp • Fresh Fried Fish • Stuffed Deviled Crab • Fried Clam Strips • Pan Broiled Shrimp • BBQ Chicken • Buttered Corn on the Cob • Baked Potatoes • Fresh Cole Slaw • French Fries • Homemade Onion Rings • Hushpuppies • Salad • Dessert Bar

SERVING LUNCH DAILY

Breakfast & Fruit Bar

OPEN SAT. & SUN. 7 AM-\$3.99

Our commitment to you...
GREAT FOOD, GREAT SERVICE, GREAT VALUE!

HOLDEN BEACH CAUSEWAY • 842-5515