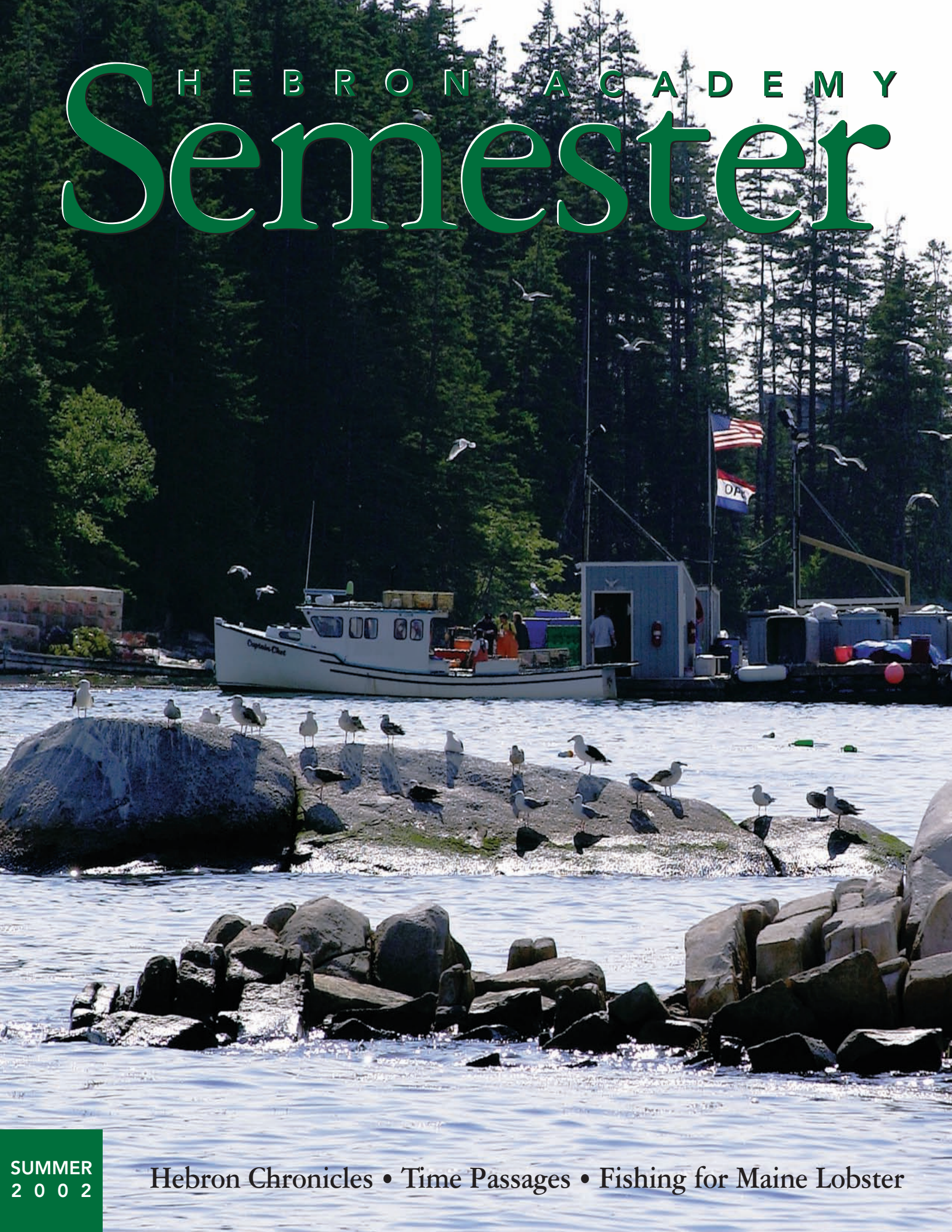


HEBRON ACADEMY Semester



SUMMER
2002

Hebron Chronicles • Time Passages • Fishing for Maine Lobster

From Ocean Floor to Table Top:



Stacks of traps on the wharf at Witham's Lobster, Inc. in Tenants Harbor.

Fishing for Maine Lobster

Hundreds of years ago lobster was so abundant that Indians used it for fertilizer and fish bait. To the colonists, lobster was “poverty food,” suitable only for children, prisoners and indentured servants. One old story goes that you hid your pot of lobster stew when the minister came to call, not because you didn’t want to share it but because you were ashamed to be caught eating it. How times have changed. 🦞 Summertime Maine is filled with folks “from away” seeking the ultimate Down East food: lobster. Hundreds of inland and waterside restaurants offer shore dinners and many will ship live lobster off to your Aunt Louise in Milwaukee. In Maine, even McDonald’s adds a lobster roll to its summer menu. 🦞 Gift shops along the length of Route 1 hawk anything and everything with a lobster theme to tourists gone lobster-crazy. Rockland’s annual festival—a celebration of all things lobster—this year served over 22,000 pounds of lobster. A popular pair of calendars are devoted, in a lighthearted but respectful way, to the bachelor lobstermen and lobsterwomen of Maine. 🦞 With a product that is best served simply—steamed with butter—lobster fishing is a surprisingly complex and fascinating business like no other.



By the truckload. Bert Witham '60 (left) chats with his bait deliveryman. At the height of the season he will have two truckloads (150–200 bushels) of bait delivered each day for the seventeen boats that fish for him. The bait, usually herring, is transferred from the truck into the bait shed bins using a small conveyor belt, then salted so it won't spoil.

Like any good fisherman looking to move up, her goal for next year is a bigger boat and a hauler.

Every day is different

Lincoln Tully '93 loves lobstering. He likes working for himself; being the boss. "I get out of it what I put into it," he says. And every day is different. "You don't know what you'll make each day. I would hate knowing ahead of time what my paycheck would be. It wouldn't be much incentive to go to work."

Linc belongs to a lobstermen's cooperative on Isle au Haut. Rather than sell their catch individually, the lobstermen formed an association to pool their resources. They buy fuel and bait as a group and sell their lobsters as a group. As the season winds down, they "pound"

their lobsters, waiting for the prices to go up during the winter.

The first lobster pound was on Vinalhaven, in 1875. Pounds hold lobster in seawater tanks, in crates tethered to harbor docks, or sometimes in coves that can be secured from shoreside predators like raccoons. The lobster tank in your local grocery store is a miniature pound. By pounding lobster, dealers can wait for new shells to harden or for prices to go up.

Bigger fish

Bert Witham '60 has seventeen boats fishing out of his Tenants Harbor wharf, including his own. Each day he provides fuel, bait, gloves and bands for the fishermen. When they return at the end of the day their catch is weighed, sorted and crated, and they are paid for it. In turn Bert sells the catch to the William Atwood Lobster Company, a distributor in Spruce Head.

Bert's house overlooks his wharf. It's a modest home, trim and tidy, much like Bert himself. Through his living room's picture windows he keeps an eye on the boats coming in to unload their catch. Still an active lobsterman, Bert said it wasn't profitable for him to stay on shore, and besides, he likes lobstering.

"I can't think of a better way to make a living," he said. "I'm my own boss, I can come and go as I please, I'm outdoors all the time and it's always interesting." Just a few weeks ago he and his crew pulled up a giant sea turtle that was snagged in their gear. Turtles are awkward but powerful when they are out of the water, so the men kept their distance as they cautiously untangled it and returned it to the ocean. In his fifty years of fishing Bert has also caught a couple of whales, an amazing experience he says. "It's like

Lobstering is not the sort of occupation that one chooses like he might accounting, designing or selling shoes. By necessity, harvesters are independent and self-reliant. They are committed to long hours of hard physical work in an unforgiving environment. Yet they are drawn to it. A typical lobster harvester is out on the water before dawn when a cool land breeze will help him out to sea. Aboard his boat he may have a load of traps ready to set, or he may be planning to "haul and dump"—pull his traps, rebait them and set them right back where they were. Each day, most full-time fishermen will spend six to twelve hours on the water checking 250 to 350 traps.

Starting small

This summer 13-year-old Valerie White, daughter of Bruce White '78, is lobster fishing in the waters off Southport Island. Valerie has a student license and fishes twenty-eight traps, hauling them by hand from her 14' outboard boat. She and her father go out in the evenings to check the traps, but because Bruce holds only a non-commercial license, by law he cannot touch any of the gear.


Valerie crates her catch during the week and on Saturdays sells her lobsters to Robinson's Wharf, a local restaurant and lobster shipper. Her father's license limits him to five traps, and when the family dines on lobster, it's Bruce's catch that goes into the pot.

Like many fishermen, Valerie hates painting buoys and repairing traps. She would much rather be out on the water hauling. Because new lobster traps can cost as much as \$80, she looks for used traps advertised in *Uncle Henry's*, a weekly swap and sell magazine. Used lobster traps generally run five to ten dollars apiece.


they know you're helping them. They watch you with that big eye while you untangle them."

Bert is the fifth generation of his family in the business—his son makes six. And lobster fishing is certainly a business. Buying stations like Witham's Lobster must keep a constant eye on supply and demand, adjusting their prices to maintain enough profit margin to cover expenses and maintain their way of life. Managing fuel, bait and other deliveries; paying the fishermen; and negotiating prices with distributors is a big job, handled for Witham's by Bert's wife, Donni.

Want to harvest lobster? Here's what you'll need.

 **A birthright.** Maine lobstermen—and women—are usually descendents of lobstermen, working the banks and ledges fished by their fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers before them. Youngsters start with a few traps hauled by hand from a rowboat and then often become sternmen—filling bait bags, carrying gear, and so forth—on a larger boat. Eventually they earn the right to fish their community's traditional areas—grounds that are often fiercely protected from outsiders.

Lobstermen keep an eye on harvesters who may try to move in; discouraging such fishermen often begins with cutting their pot warps and can escalate into physical violence. In her wry memoir, *The Lobster Chronicles*, fisherman Linda Greenlaw describes the "gear war" she and her fellow islanders considered when outsiders began laying traps around Isle au Haut. Replacing lost gear can be expensive, and ultimately Linda and her colleagues decided that they would rather be fishing.


 **A competitive spirit.** Bert Witham says that the best lobstermen are competitive. And they face competition on all sides. Because each harvester is limited by law to no more than 800 traps, they must fish more efficiently, competing with their neighbors for the supply of lobster in their fishing grounds.


Maine lobstermen also compete with their Canadian counterparts. The Canadian fishery is regulated differently from Maine's. Canadian fishermen frown on Maine's year-round industry, yet they have no maximum size limits on their legal lobsters.


Canada has come to the rescue of Maine lobstermen in recent years however. The current boom in lobster landings resulted in a market glut and a surplus of product. Canadian processors started buying lobster from Maine vendors, processing the meat and shipping it back to the United States and overseas.


Crate expectations. At Witham's, the lobsters are weighed and sorted into crates by type: hard or softshell. Each crate is marked with the fisherman's name so he can be paid for his catch when it is sold to the dealer.

Lobster Lore


 *Homarus americanus*, the American lobster, hides in crevices and under rocks at depths up to 180 feet. They feed on clams, crabs, snails, and small fish in addition to algae and eelgrass. They will also eat each other, which is why their claws are banded when they are caught.


 American lobsters have two front claws. The large thick-toothed claw is a crusher; lobsters tear food apart with the smaller, sharper pincher claw. Lobsters can drop a claw at will and grow a new one.


 The female's 3,000 to 100,000 eggs develop inside her body until she extrudes them up to a year after mating with a male lobster. She then carries them under her tail for another nine months or so.

 Newborn lobsters are less than ½ inch long. Easy prey for birds and fish, they drift for

two or three weeks before sinking to the ocean bottom to grow to maturity.

 Lobsters must molt as they grow, periodically shedding their outgrown shells. The new shells are soft and provide little protection from predators until they have hardened. Baby lobsters generally molt four times before they settle to the ocean floor.

 Maine's lobstermen account for the largest piece of the national catch. In 1999, U.S. harvesters landed a record 87,420,414 pounds of lobster valued at \$322,754,058. At 53,494,058 pounds, Maine's catch accounted for 61 per cent of that total.

 Lobster was classified as a delicacy during World War II and was not rationed.



🦞 **A license.** If you are a full-time student under the age of 23, you're in luck. Find a licensed lobsterman as a sponsor and you qualify for a \$46 student license allowing you to fish up to 150 traps. If your goal is a commercial license and you are over 23, you still need a sponsor and must serve at least a two-year apprenticeship during which you must log 200 five-hour days of fishing under your sponsor's guidance. Your apprentice license will run \$93 for the right to fish up to 150 traps. After a successful apprenticeship you may apply for a commercial license.

Commercial licenses fall into three categories; fees range from \$93 to \$279, with a lobster promotion surcharge of \$25–75 tacked on, and all are restricted to a maximum of 800 traps. A Class I license covers a single fisherman. A Class II license holder can have one unlicensed person working with him. Fishermen with larger boats often need two sternmen and must carry a Class III license. Additional licenses are required for dealers (wholesale and retail), for transporting lobsters out of state and for processing and selling lobster meat.

There are over 5,000 licensed commercial harvesters in Maine and almost 2,000 non-commercial fishermen. Of the commercial harvesters, about 3,500 are employed full-time in the fishery and 2,000 part time. Another 1100 or so hold student or apprentice licenses.

🦞 **A boat.** Powered by oars, outboards, or inboard gasoline or diesel engines, lobster boats range in size from small dories right up to 45' trawlers. Bigger, more powerful boats can fish further out; the smaller ones stay close to shore. While Valerie White can fish successfully with a chart and compass, boats like Bert Witham's sport all kinds of electronic gear, including Bert's favorite, a video GPS plotter. The plotter allows the lobsterman to track his course and mark his strings of traps. A push of a button will bring him back to the traps on a later day or allow him to lay a third string between two he has previously dropped.

🦞 **Traps, bait bags, pot warps and buoys.** In the last twenty years rectangular wire traps have replaced the wooden half-circle style, but the basic design and function remains the same.

Traps are between three and four feet long and each one is divided into sections. Funnel-shaped netting allows the lobster to enter the "kitchen" section where a bag full of bait—usually herring—is placed. Once the lobster has dined, another funnel net guides it into the "parlor," where, theoretically, it stays until the trap is hauled. Escape vents allow undersized lobsters to exit easily, but are too small for the larger lobsters to pass through. Modern traps must also have biodegradable ghost vents, which will break down if the trap is lost on the bottom, freeing all lobsters.

Up to three bricks are used to weight the traps to keep them from shifting underwater. Runners on the bottom of the trap

prevent lobster claws, legs and antennae from being crushed as the traps are lifted onto the boat's gunwhales.

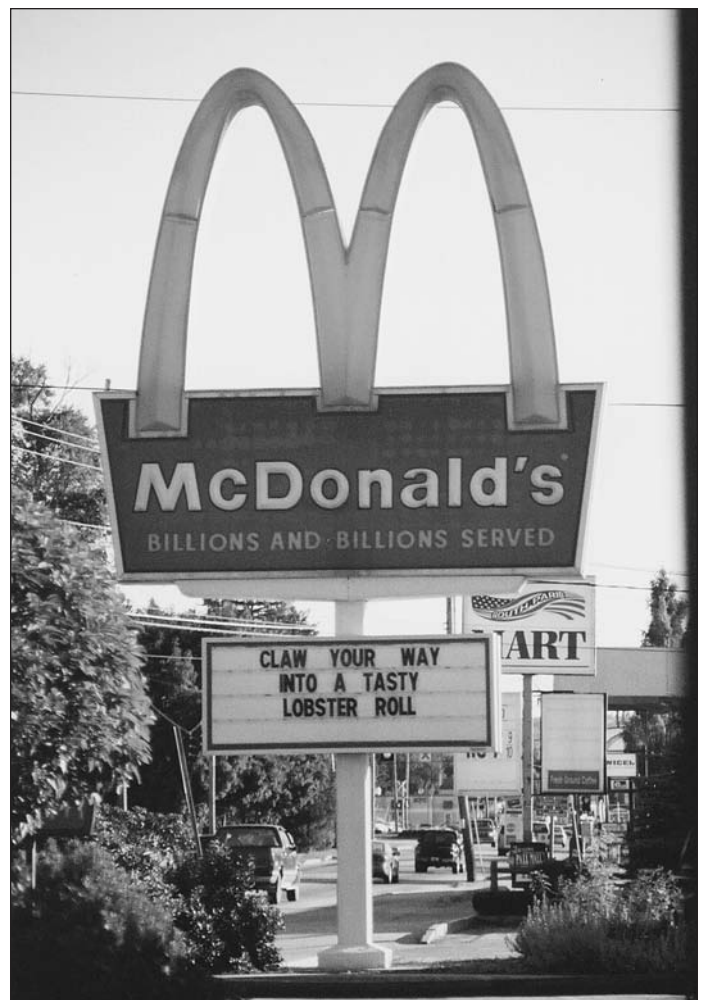
Buoys not only mark the traps' locations, but are a way to identify whose traps are whose. Each fisherman's buoy colors are unique, at least within his zone. Pot warps, the lines that connect buoy to trap, are adjusted for the depth of the area fished. Harvesters often connect a series of traps together, forming a string.

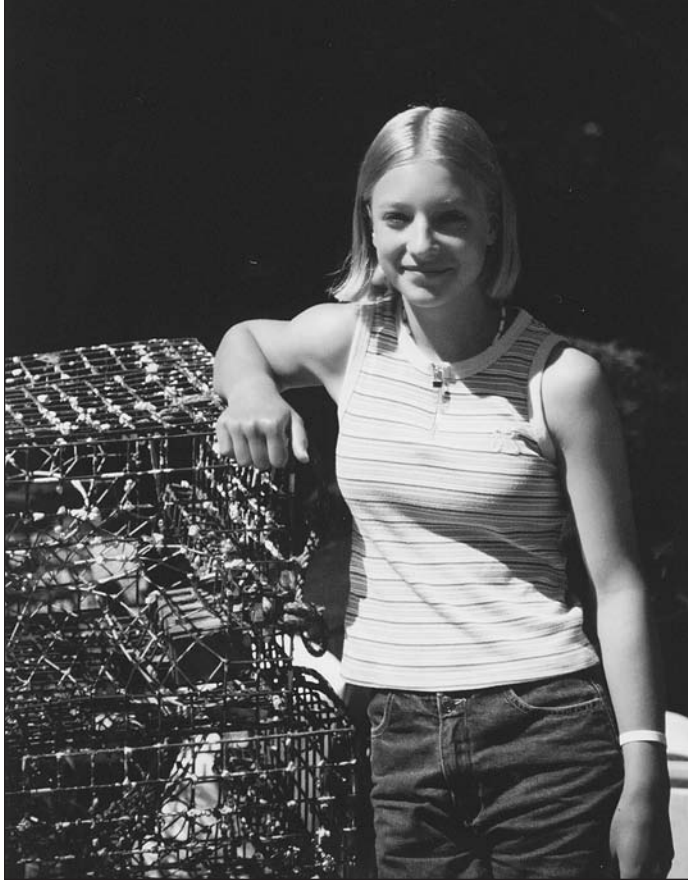
🦞 **Trap tags.** Every trap must carry a trap tag, which looks like a cross between a beefy hospital bracelet and a tie wrap. The tags are marked with the fisherman's license number, a tag number, fishing zone and year. The tags aid identification in the case of lost traps, and provide a method for the Marine Patrol to enforce trap limits. They cost \$.20 each and are issued by the Maine Department of Marine Resources.

🦞 **Fish totes or boxes.** You will need a way to carry your bait to your traps and to bring your lobsters home again. Fish totes come in all shapes and sizes; the floating ones can store lobsters for a few days until they are sold to a dealer.


🦞 **Fuel and bait.** These are the "consumables." Fuel is probably the largest on-going expense for a season of lobstering. Bait can also be costly and most fisherman will use 20 to 25 bushels of bait for 300 traps. Valerie White buys her bait by the bushel; Bert Witham by the truckload.

Fries with that? In Maine, even the Golden Arches goes lobster-crazy in the summertime. Within five miles of the South Paris McDonald's (right), there are at least six places to buy live lobster (The Lake Store, The Country Way, Amato's, Hannaford's, the Fresh Fish Market and Crystal Spring Farm), and many more restaurants that serve lobster rolls or lobster subs.





Next generation. Thirteen-year-old Valerie White (left, with a stack of her traps) has the perfect summer job. "I don't have to work every day!" she says. The white "bracelet" on Valerie's wrist is actually one of her trap tags, high fashion at her school. She recently spent a day fishing with her sponsor, commercial harvester Jennifer Wickline. During a full working day on the water, Valerie acted as sternman—she filled bait bags, banded lobster and took a turn driving the boat.

 **A lobster measure, banding tool and v-notcher.** A small brass ruler about six inches long, the measure is the smallest, simplest and most important lobsterman's tool. Each lobster in a trap is measured from the back of its eye socket to the end of its body shell. Lobsters with carapaces measuring less than 3 ¼ inches and more than 5 inches are illegal in Maine and must be thrown back.

The banding tool eases the task of placing large rubber bands around each claw, preventing lobsters from hurting each other or an unwary fisherman.

"Berried" (egg-bearing) females, no matter the size, must also be put back, but many fishermen will first cut a small v-shaped notch in one of their rear flippers to mark them as proven breeders. The next time that lobster is caught, even if she has released her eggs, the v-notch shows that she is a breeder and back into the ocean she goes. The notch will disappear after two or three molts but many harvesters will re-notch females to keep them in the breed stock. V-notching is a simple, effective method of fishery conservation that came into common practice in Maine in 1917.

"If people have money, they'll buy lobster," said Linc Tully. "But we have to protect the resource to keep the industry going." Exactly *how* to conserve the resource is widely debated among lobstermen, scientists and bureaucrats. For many years, the annual catch stayed fairly constant. "Lobstering was something you did because that's what your family did, not because there was money in it," Bert Witham explained. On a cold January day in the late 1970s Bert hauled 200 traps and brought home five or six lobsters. Now, he says, there are more lobsters than he's seen in fifty years.

Fears of overfishing led to a variety of conservation measures. During the summer months, lobstermen may not haul traps after 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and all day Sunday. They are limited to 800 traps each, down from 1200 a few years ago. Five of Maine's seven

fishing zones have limited entry—waiting lists—for new fishing licenses, but there is no outright moratorium.

Although there are more traps in Maine waters now—nearly three million today, compared to 100,000 a century ago—the catch is steadily rising. After hovering around 20 million pounds for forty years, the catch doubled from the 1990 total of 28 million pounds to 57 million pounds in 2000. (The national catch increased to 84 million pounds from 62 million over the same period.)

From fisherman to consumer

Although some fishermen like Valerie White sell directly to restaurants, most go through a buying station like Witham's Lobster or a cooperative like Isle au Haut's, or they may sell to a trucker who will bring their product to a buying station.

Until smacks came into use in the early nineteenth century, it was impossible to ship fresh lobster any distance. Small sailing vessels with seawater wells in their holds, smacks could transport live lobster to far-off places like New York. As demand rose, canneries filled the need for an easy way to ship lobster long distances. Burnham & Morrill, now synonymous with baked beans, was one of the early Maine lobster canneries.

The air freight industry made it possible to ship lobster great distances in a matter of hours. The William Atwood Lobster Company in Spruce Head is now the largest shipper in Maine, handling Witham's catch among many others. Bill Atwood (father of David '87) buys the catch from buying stations in Maine and the Canadian Maritimes and ships daily to restaurants across the country, including the Grand Central Oyster Bar in New York and Red Lobster; to grocery store chains; and to wholesalers.

Atwood's packs their lobster in waterproof packages which go into airline freight containers. Each container, or "can" holds about 2200 pounds of lobster. They also truck lobster all over the east coast. In a typical year, Atwood's will ship over four million pounds of lobster, both live and processed, with the bulk of the business occurring between July and October.

Handle with care

A highly perishable product that must be treated gently from the moment it is caught, lobster captures the imagination like few other foods. The lobster rolls at your favorite Maine dockside diner, the live lobster you ship to Aunt Louise in Milwaukee, the stuffed lobster tail on your plate at the local Red Lobster restaurant, all may have come from Bert Witham's traps off Tenants Harbor, or Lincoln Tully's off Isle au Haut, or Valerie White's from Townsend Gut. Eat up! You are supporting Maine's rich lobstering tradition.



Lobster Recipes

Bert Witham's Favorite

cooked lobster meat
mayonnaise
salt and lots of pepper
two slices of homemade bread
butter

Mix the lobster meat with just enough mayonnaise to hold it together. Season to taste, but the more pepper the better. Thickly butter the bread and toast it in a frying pan. Fill the bread with lobster and enjoy.

Bill Atwood's Famous Lobster Roll

1 lb. cooked lobster meat, thawed if frozen
½ c. Miracle Whip
pepper
celery salt
4 hot dog rolls (in Maine, these rolls are split on the top)

Cut cooked lobster meat into bite-sized pieces, about ¾" in size, and place in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Add the Miracle Whip on the top of the lobster meat (you can add more later, depending on the consistency you desire). Add 2 shakes of pepper and 3 shakes of celery salt. Mix all ingredients well and divide evenly into hot dog rolls.

From www.atwoodlobster.com.

Lobster Newburg

4 tbsp. butter, divided ½ c. dry sherry
3 tbsp. flour 1 c. light cream
1 ½ lbs. freshly cooked 1 c. heavy cream
lobster meat, cut in 1 dash salt
large chunks 1 dash white pepper
1 tbsp. paprika 1 tbsp. chopped chives

Melt butter in a saucepan then add the flour and cook on low stirring for 4–5 minutes. Let this (roux) cool in the pot. In a pan with 1 tablespoon butter add lobster meat. Sauté until meat is warmed through, now remove and keep warm. Add paprika and sherry. Continue to cook for two minutes. Add fresh cream and cook until mixture is almost boiling. Whisk in the roux and cook slowly for 10 minutes stirring so the sauce doesn't scorch. Now add warm lobster and stir gently until thoroughly blended. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve over toast points, puff pastry shells or rice with a full-bodied French chardonnay.

Recipe courtesy David Chisolm, Sage food service manager at Hebron.

Lobster Casserole

1 lb. lobster meat 2–3 tbsp. sherry
3 tbsp. butter 3 slices white bread,
3 tbsp. flour crusts removed, and
¾ tsp. dry mustard torn into small pieces
salt and pepper Ritz cracker crumbs
2 cups rich milk

Sauté lobster in butter to start pink color; do not cook too fast or too long. Combine flour with seasonings and sprinkle over lobster; add milk slowly, stirring to blend. Cook, stirring gently, until thick. Add sherry. Add bread. Pour into a greased casserole, top with crumbs. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes.

Lobster Stew

serves 15

2 11 ½ ounce cans frozen lobster meat, thawed
1 ½ sticks butter
1 gallon whole milk
salt and pepper

Melt butter in a large stockpot. Add lobster meat and sauté for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand for 7 minutes. Add 4 cups milk, heated, ¼ cup at a time, stirring. Add remaining milk, heated, in a stream, stirring. Add salt and pepper to taste; let the stew cool to room temperature and chill it, covered, overnight. Reheat the stew over very low heat and serve it in heated bowls.

Based on a recipe from *Gourmet* magazine.

Boiled Lobster

Allow 2 quarts of clean seawater for each lobster to be boiled, or use the same quantity of fresh tap water, adding ½ teaspoon salt per quart. The number of lobsters to be boiled determines the minimum kettle size. The water should fill the pot one-half to not more than two-thirds full. Bring water to rolling boil over high heat. Place lobsters head first into the pot, completely submerging them.

Cover the pot tightly, return to a boil as quickly as possible, and begin timing. Prevent water from boiling over, but be sure to keep it boiling throughout the cooking time.

Boil a soft shell lobster 7 minutes for the first pound plus 3 minutes for each additional pound. Boil a hard shell lobster 10 minutes for the first pound plus 3 minutes for each additional pound.

Because shells may turn red before the water returns to a boil, do not use color as an indication of doneness. When the antennae pull out easily, the lobster is done. Immediately transfer lobsters to individual plates. Garnish each with ½ lemon, quartered lengthwise. Pour melted butter into small bowls and serve separately.

Buying Tips

Look for lobsters that are active. When picked up they should raise their claws and curl their tails under.

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Maine Lobstermen's Association: www.maine lobster men.org
National Marine Fisheries Service: www.nmfs.noaa.gov





This recipe was contributed by Seth Caswell '89, chef de cuisine at Nick & Toni's Restaurant in East Hampton, New York.

Lobster Risotto

At Nick & Toni's Restaurant, I have the availability of seafood from nearby Montauk, New York, fresh whole fish from the Mediterranean, Alaskan King Salmon, and nearly any other catch of the sea. But when it come to purchasing live lobsters, I always direct my purveyors to bring me live Maine lobsters. I have found the cold waters of the Maine coast create a sweeter meat and softer shell in comparison to lobsters from the waters of Nova Scotia or Long Island.

This recipe was developed as a luxurious alternative to simply warming lobster meat in a creamy sauce or flavored butters. It is a nice dish for a gourmet home cook to prepare for guests who want to enjoy the full flavor of lobster without the fuss of opening shells or wearing a plastic bib.

Prepare lobsters

Equipment

large stockpot
mallet or heavy meat tenderizer
lobster crackers
small fork
two large metal bowls

Ingredients

- four 1 ½ lb lobsters
- 1 cup kosher or sea salt
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 Tbl whole black peppercorns
- 2 bay leaves

Procedure

Fill stockpot half way with water and then add salt, vinegar, peppercorns and bay leaves. Bring this to a boil to blanch the lobsters.

Most folks do not like to butcher live lobsters the way we do in the restaurant, by simply separating the claws, bodies and tails while they are still twitching. One alternative method is to place live lobsters in the freezer for ten minutes to put them to "sleep". Regardless of the method you choose, twist claws and knuckles from body and pull entire tail away from body.

Prepare a large bowl filled with ice cubes and water to make an ice bath to submerge lobsters after cooking. Put lobster claws and knuckles into stockpot and cook for four minutes, then immediately place the lobster pieces into the ice bath (this prevents overcooking the meat). When the stockpot returns to a boil, put the tails into the liquid for 1 ½ minutes, also transferring the tails to the water bath. You may now discard the blanching liquid, or save it to blanch lobsters another day.

Using a mallet, lobsters crackers, and a small fork, remove the meat from the claws and knuckles and then chop the meat into large pieces. Cover lobster meat with a damp paper towel and plastic wrap and refrigerate until later use. Do not discard the shells. Using a large sharp chef's knife split the lobster tails in half by flattening the tail on your cutting board and in one motion, cutting lengthwise through the shell and meat of the tail. Put the tails in the refrigerator until later use.

Clean the lobster bodies by scraping the gills with either a spoon or a blunt knife.

Prepare lobster stock

Equipment

heavy bottomed 4 qt stock pot
mallet or meat tenderizer
wooden spoon
fine sieve or chinois strainer

Ingredients

- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1 head fennel, chopped with fronds (leafy tops)
- ½ cup tomato paste
- 2 cups white wine
- 2 oz cognac
- 4 sprigs tarragon
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 tsp whole black peppercorns

Procedure

Heat a heavy bottomed stock pot until it is almost smoking. Add the uncooked lobster bodies and the shells from the claws and knuckles to the pot. Using a mallet or meat tenderizer, crush the shells into the bottom of the pot to release the juices and create a flavorful base for the stock.

After 6–8 minutes, when a thick residue has developed on the base of the pot, add the onions, carrots and fennel bulb; mix with a wooden spoon for two minutes over a medium-high heat. Add the tomato paste to coat the vegetables and lobster shells, and then add the white wine, deglazing the pot, while scraping the bottom of the pot to pick up the flavor and essence of the lobster. Quickly, add the cognac, allowing the alcohol to burn off (watch your eyebrows).

Next, add the black peppercorns, fennel fronds, tarragon, bay leaves, and thyme, along with 2 gallons of water and simmer for 2 hours.

Strain the stock through a fine sieve, chinois strainer, or coffee filters, and discard the vegetables, shells and herbs.

Return the strained liquid (you will have approximately 6–7 qts) to a clean pot and reduce the volume of the liquid until you have about 3–4 cups of a thickly textured, rust-colored broth that is richly flavored. Reducing the liquid is done by

maintaining a constant simmer and skimming any foam that floats to the top with a ladle.

Strain again and cool broth in a bowl uncovered in the refrigerator.

Prepare risotto

Equipment

Heavy-bottomed sauté pan with 2" sides
wooden spoon
6 oz ladle

Ingredients

- 2 Tbl olive oil
- 1 large onion, minced
- 2 cups Arborio rice (short grained Italian rice for risotto)
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- ½ cup white wine
- 6 cups warm chicken stock
- 2 cups warm lobster broth (above recipe)
- reserved chopped lobster meat (above recipe)
- 2 Tbl butter
- 2 Tbl grated parmesan cheese (Grana Padana or Reggiano)
- 4 basil leaves, washed, dried, and cut in a chiffonade (fine ribbon strands)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Procedure

Heat olive oil in the pan over med-low heat. Sweat the onions, stirring with a wooden spoon until they are soft and opaque. Add the thyme and stir for one minute. Increase heat to medium.

Add white wine and stir until wine has completely evaporated. Begin adding the chicken stock

Stir continuously while preparing the risotto. Add the chicken stock one ladle at a time, allowing the rice to completely absorb the stock each time. Season the rice with a pinch of salt and pepper for each ladle added.

When all of the chicken stock has been absorbed, begin adding the lobster broth. As the final ladle of broth is incorporated into the risotto, add the following ingredients: lobster meat, parmesan, butter and a pinch of salt and pepper. Finally, add the basil. The risotto should be thick and creamy, the reward of stirring continuously while making the rice.

When the risotto is complete, a small sauté pan should be heated with ½ Tbl olive oil and 1 tsp butter to sear the split lobster tails. Top the creamy risotto with the caramelized lobster tail and garnish with a few fried basil leaves. Enjoy the risotto with your favorite wine and some crusty bread with which to clean the plate.

Serves four.

