

Trapper Arne's Crayfish Newsletter for

MARCH 2013



the
CRAYFISH TALE

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THE TASTE OF CRAYFISH

Many years ago I learned the Roman adage of “De Gustibus non est Disputandum”. For those whose Latin is getting rusty, the translation is “You can’t argue about taste”.

Be that as it may, people always get a kick out of debating taste of practically anything. But as we are all different to some extent in the taste bud department, we all tend to come to diverging opinions about the taste of everything. The same problem is inherent when it comes to colors. My wife and I have difficulties agreeing on what color our walls in the front room should be. So what else is new...

But I still like to talk about the taste of crayfish. As I have talked about crayfish for years, I ought to also talk about their taste. As I have eaten thousands of crayfish over the years, I most likely do so because I like their taste.

So what is their taste?

This is almost a trick question.

Some people would answer - it depends. Yes, of course it does. But how do crayfish taste without all the different and exotic spices that so often are added to a crayfish boil. Now, that is a different ‘kettle of fish’ if you pardon my pun. I asked several people this question, and all of them answered, it depends on how you cook them. But don’t crayfish, and lobsters and crabs, have a taste all their own?

Yes, they do, and here is one person’s explanation of this. Crustaceans,

like crayfish, crabs and lobsters, have, compared to fish, a higher proportion of glycogen, a polysaccharide that turns into sugar glucose. Glycogen comes from the Greek word glukos which means ‘sweet’. There is also a certain amount of glycine, an amino acid that intensifies the sweetness. One person suggested that crayfish taste somewhere between lobster and shrimp.

So crayfish are inherently sweet, but apparently not sweet enough to satisfy our taste buds. Asking a young man who had just trapped a bunch of crayfish for his crayfish meal what he put into his crayfish boil, he told me: ‘nothing’. I could not believe that anyone would be satisfied with crayfish cooked without even a pinch of salt. But there we come back to the old axiom, you can’t argue about taste. He apparently thought it was great with what I would consider a rather blah taste.

So the answer to the question: ‘how do crayfish taste?’ always leads to the best answer: ‘it all depends!’ Maybe that type of an answer is somewhat of a cop-out. But the trouble is that it may be the best answer. After all, what are chefs and cooks for? They are there to make foods of any sort more palatable for those who are interested in eating it. The more you look into the art of making foods palatable, the more you realize what a tremendous subject this is. Restaurants come and go by their

reputation for 'good' food, so there must be something to this so called art.

What makes food tasty? A really successful chef has several taste secrets up his chef's hat, and when he applies some of them, he either scores a hit or he flunks.

A lot of foods don't taste worth a darn unless you add something tasty to it. What would foods be like unless we had spices to add to them. How would some food taste without salt and pepper, for example? Probably rather bland and simply blah. And crayfish are not very different. If you cook and eat crayfish that have simply been boiled without adding any thing but water, you'd be very disappointed. Crayfish and any other crustaceans don't taste much by themselves. How do I know? Well, one time when cooking several batches of crayfish on my 'turkey' cooker in the garage, I forgot the salt in one batch. Consequently the crays turned out rather tasteless. I had to re-cook them with another batch that had the required amount of salt in it. Much better! And then of course I added my favorite spice - dill.

So there you have it: "De Gustibus non est Disputandum". But for us ordinary folks, here is what you should do to make your crayfish catch taste better.

ARE YOU READY?

The new crayfish season is just about here. Be ready with the best of all crayfish traps – the Trapper Arne Trappy, XL, Jackpot and the Jumbo crayfish traps.

Greetings.

Trapper Arne

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No matter whether you are a Cajun preparing for a crawfish boil by a Louisiana bayou or a Swede preparing for a KRAFTSKIVA, you have to start with adding salt to the boiling water. That of course also goes for cooking lobster, crab or shrimp. Without salt, the end result is usually disappointing.

To a bayou boil you add not only some salt, but also several spices. The best known such spice mixture is Zatarain's peppery Crab Boil, which not only adds a taste all its own but also hides the possible muddy taste some crayfish may have acquired. Add to that some potatoes, garlic, corn on the cob and maybe some sausages and you have the beginning of a real Cajun crawfish boil. Some even add onions, lemons and beer.

Some Swedes, like me, are happiest if you limit yourself to the salty water and some handfuls of dill crowns. Maybe a bottle of dark ale and a lump of sugar, but that's it.

Adding these ingredients, the real taste of the sweetness in a crayfish or a lobster has long become obscured, and we now associate the flavor of our crustaceans with what we added to the crawfish boil.

But, why not?