

## SLOW FOOD DEEP SEA FISHING TRIP JUNE 2008

I rose early to be greeted by shafts of sunlight streaming through my curtains and the usual morning chorus of mewing seagulls. Today, I was to join the Slow Food Deep Sea Fishing Trip.

I hurriedly pulled on my clothes and shoved a waterproof jacket into my rucksack plus a mixed selection of salad veggies from my garden into a tub for my lunch, alongside a large bottle of water. It was to be a long day – nearly 7 hours afloat - so I didn't want to go hungry or thirsty!!!

Katy, the Slow Food Leader for Cornwall, had agreed to meet up and we had a leisurely walk through the rather sleepy streets of Newquay to the harbour area where we were to pick up our boat, The Bootlegger.

Our crew consisted of the very experienced and weathered Skipper, Colin, and his shipmate, Graham, and then Katy and I, a couple who had driven down especially from up country to attend the day, Charla and her Dad and Ben and Peter and Mark. Once we had all arrived we chugged out of the harbour and headed out to sea. It was a beautiful day and the sun glistened on the waves. We almost broke into song, but for now, everyone chatted away getting to know one another.

The chat was interrupted by a shout at the stern – a pod of dolphins had arrived and were swimming playfully alongside our boat. Everyone was delighted and exhilarated by the experience. We all hung over the rails excitedly willing the dolphins to stay on and frolic in the waters alongside the boat as we sped along to the first wreck from which to fish. All too soon the dolphins swam away and we sat back watching the gulls and seabirds flying overhead squawking expectantly at the thought of food as we prepared our bait of freshly caught mackerel for our lines.

We soon reached the reef and lines were speedily cast astern. We even had a shark and an eel line rigged up. Mostly though, we were fishing for Pollack and Ling. We sat patiently waiting, lines bobbing in the gentle waves. The sun beat down on our shoulders – it was idyllic. The silence was suddenly broken by excited shouts from the girls as a tug was felt on their lines and then a flurry of frantic action followed as they furiously wound in their catches. The males of the crew were rather more laid back, preferring to land their catches on board and then compare notes on the size of fish landed.

Soon, the fish was flowing into the crates on the deck fast and furiously. It was thirsty work but we were all concentrating so hard on catching enough to take home for supper that night that we didn't notice. Our main catch was Pollack, a solitary ling, a couple of mackerel, numerous dog fish and lots of pouting, which we threw back, as they were too small. It was riveting work and there was much friendly banter and jokes on board.

After a while, we moved onto another reef and wreck which was nearly 10 miles offshore. We could just make out the Cornish coastline and big white clouds hung over the spine of Cornwall, yet overhead we had beautiful clear blue skies which reflected off the water and waves. Weather-wise, I don't think we could have asked for a better day!

All too soon the day flew by and we sadly reeled in our lines for the last time. It was time to wash, gut and fillet the day's catch ready to take home. Graham gave me a quick impromptu lesson, and with knife in hand I set to my task as the boat listed slightly in the water as we headed for home. Soon I got the hang of working with the swaying motion of the boat but my offerings were not nearly as good as Graham who is adept at this task and quickly sped through the piles of glistening bodies in the buckets. However, by the time we reached the harbour all the fish was filleted, washed and ready to share out.

We were welcomed back to port by two resident seals who swam playfully by the side of the boat waiting for scraps. The water was so crystal clear we could watch their graceful bodies

as they swam effortlessly beneath and around us. They would pop up cheekily at intervals huffing and blowing bubbles of water from their whiskers.

It was a fun trip and we all headed down the quayside with bulging bags of Pollack for a very welcome pint at the Newquay Rowing Club to mull over our day. This was followed by an impromptu meal at Katy's house. We all piled into the kitchen and it was all hands to the pump and we simply pan fried our fish with delicate seasoning and served this with home grown salad veggies from my garden, garnished by fresh bright yellow and orange nasturtiums picked by Mark straight out of Katy's garden and followed by a welcome bowl of strawberries from Ben's strawberry patch. Perfick!!! This is what Slow Food is all about – sourcing ones food, then preparing and sharing it with friends.

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June 2008