

Onboard Deep Respect Charters

by Dave Gibson

July is prime time for coastal salmon fishing, when all of the different species are present in Alaskan, Canadian, and northwestern United States waters. The shoulder seasons of spring and autumn can be productive also and are sometimes overlooked. During May in Vancouver, British Columbia, Chinook salmon average seven pounds. Chinooks actively feed at that time, but are widely dispersed. Later, the pre-spawn fish will congregate at the mouths of the rivers before continuing upstream. Your catches might not be as numerous as they would be June or July when coho and pink salmon join the mix, but the potential for a couple of seven pound or bigger Chinooks each day, per fisherman, was worth the effort.

I had somehow convinced my dad to join me in my last minute decision to pursue fish and met him at Vancouver International Airport. Our excursion would include two days of fishing on the Strait of Georgia with Captain Peter Bart of Deep Respect Charters. While choosing a fishing charter on the internet can be a bit of a crapshoot, this time I got lucky with an amiable man of experience and commitment to customer service.

We motored from the Heather Street Civic Marina past skyscrapers and permanently moored houseboats. Freighters stacked the harbor waiting to unload or receive their cargo. From doing my research and talking to Peter on the phone, I knew that part of our first day involved dropping crab pots and collecting them after fishing. Baited pots successfully set with the attached line and flagged float, we continued another fifteen miles north to the captain's chosen fishing grounds. A drizzle fell lightly as is known often to be the case there. Fish on! After only a half an hour of trolling, a lively salmon was bending my rod. He was hooked firmly in the jaw and there was no chance of it getting away. Ferries shuttled back and forth on the hour. Steep pine-packed mountains arose from the ocean in the foggy mist. A bald eagle perched in a tree and my dad spotted river otters playfully dashing about the bank. Fishing had been somewhat slow with two fish lost and only two Chinooks landed. Maybe our crab pots would be more successful.

Spring salmon



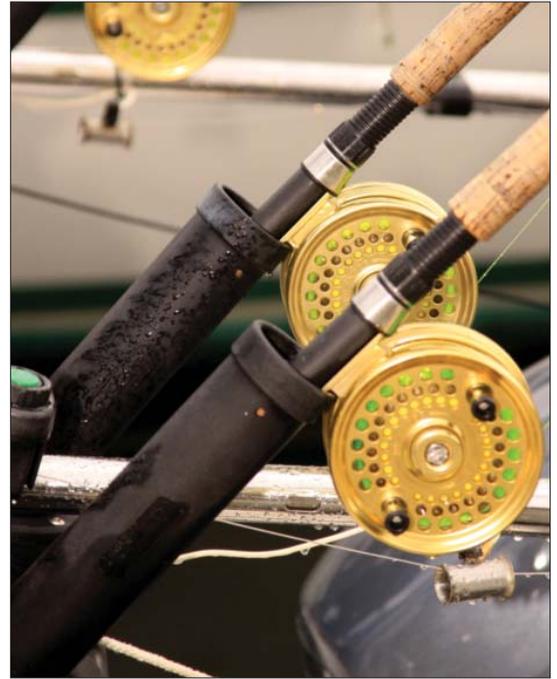
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I retrieved the line of the crab pot and began pulling hand over hand until it was onboard, and lo and behold it contained eight or nine Dungeness crabs! It was early enough in the year that the commercial crabbers hadn't arrived yet and stocks were plentiful. The bounty is due, in no small part, to restrictions. Any female must be thrown back and males measuring under 6 ½ inches are returned to the sea. We ended up with three keepers. The next pot yielded four. The captain cleaned and boiled the crab at the dock and we cracked the shells with pliers, savoring each bite.

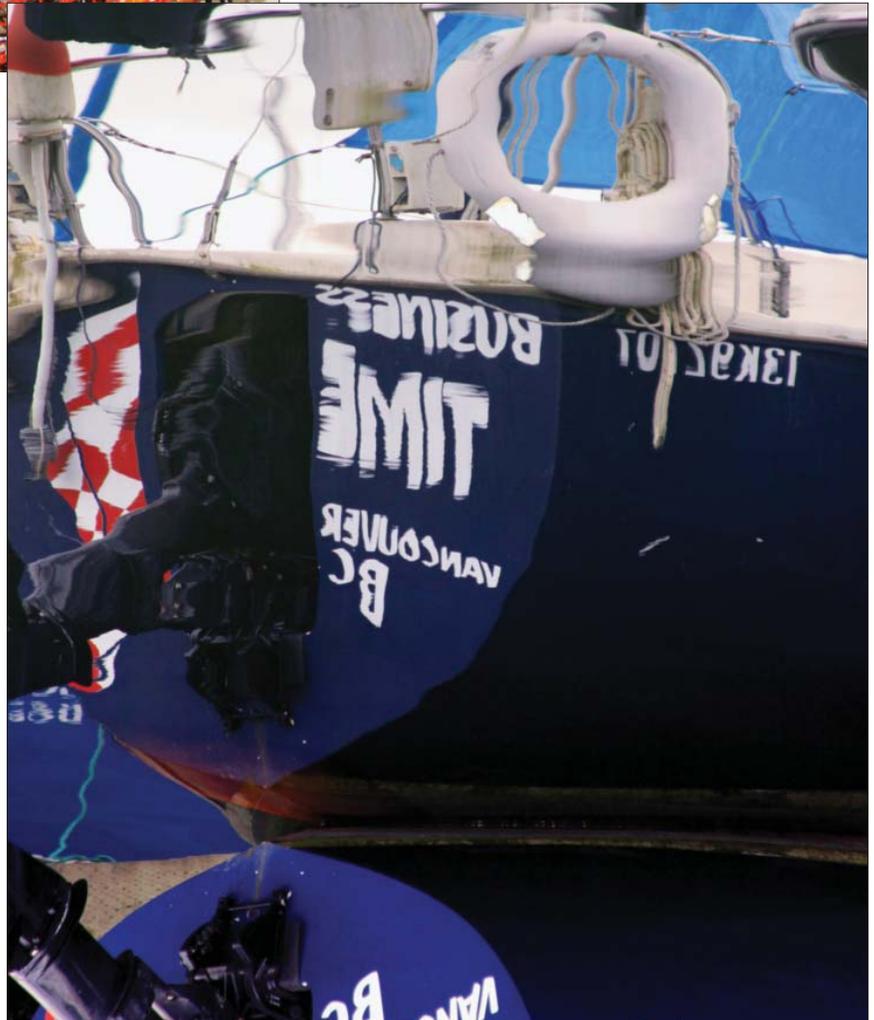
On the second day we would have just five hours on the water before our scheduled flights and it was decided to fish closer to the city. The weather was clear, calm, and warm. My dad sat in the cabin of the boat working on a sudoku when the call went out of a fish on. Racing from his seat, he soon brought to the deck an eight pound salmon! We would catch a scrawny cod and four more Chinooks that morning of typical size.

We marked our fish charts and packed the fillets on ice inside our dry-bags. Insulated in luggage, the salmon were still cold when they arrived in our kitchens hours later.

To arrange a charter with Captain Peter go to DeepRespect.net or call 866-293-7719.



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Gravlax

Homemade in 48 hours

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Derived from the Scandinavian word grava (“to dig”), and laks (“salmon”), gravlax has been prepared by Nordic fishermen since the Middle Ages. Covering salmon filets in salt and burying them in the sand above the high tide line until fermented was common practice. Today, modern palates have discarded the fermentation part of the formula and the result is mouth-watering lox as good as you’ll find in the best New York City deli.

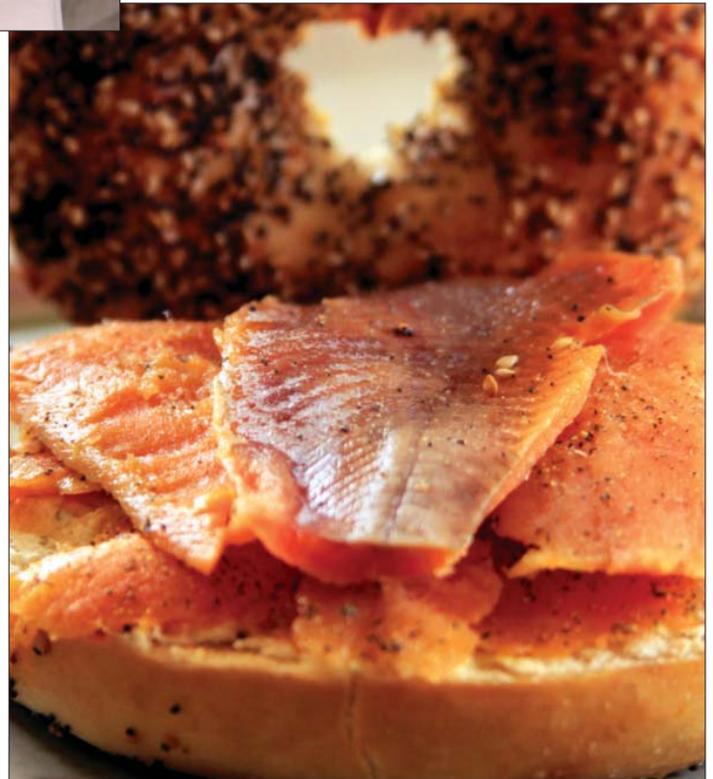
First, obtain salmon filets. Sockeye salmon is preferred but any species of salmon will work,

either fresh-caught or previously frozen. Coat one side of the salmon with a mixture of sea salt and white or brown sugar. The salt and sugar will seep into the fish thereby killing any bacteria. Pepper, dill, lemon zest, and other herbs and spices may be added to the recipe. Place the coated filet side down, and evenly apply more sugar and salt to the exposed side of the salmon. Optional: Cover with plastic wrap and weigh down to speed curing. Set in refrigerator. After 24 hours have elapsed, turn the fish over and repeat the process. Then wait another 24 hours while the meat marinates in its sweet-salty brine.

At last, rinse with cold water and carve into thin slices. Serve between a toasted cream cheese-slathered bagel of your choice. If your salmon came with the skin attached, don’t throw it away – it makes a crispy snack when sautéed.



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