

Casting About

Reeling in the Mahi



By Capt. Frank Papy

They say fish is brain food. I try to eat it every chance I get, but I don't think it is doing any good. The older I get the less I know, but I do know that good fresh fish is about \$6 a pound, so when I am sailing I always troll a couple of lines off the stern.

I carry about 600 feet of 100-pound test line, hooks, leaders and a few lures and

sailing vessel is ideal as there's no prop wash or disturbance in the water, so you can run your bait closer to the boat, and a good trolling speed is 3-8 knots. You don't have to worry about the speed. Deep-water fish don't eat with a knife and fork. They come in at 40 miles an hour.

put the line from the rod into the clothes pin, run it up to the top of the mast so that when the fish hits it pops out. The advantage is that when the boat rolls it makes the bait move from side to side. The fish seem to love it. I figure it increases your odds of catching a fish about 20 percent.

When fishing from my Morgan 41 charter boat (which goes 11 knots: 7 forward and 4 sideways) I always troll a couple of lines off the stern to pick up some mackerel or dolphin. It breaks the routine for charterers when we get a strike.

I love to pull in a couple of 3-foot mahi mahi to my charterers' amazement. I gaff them, give them the alcohol treatment, lay them out on the aft deck and have my picture taken skinning them out and filleting these beauties while having a rum and coke on a sunny day with some Jimmy Buffet music on.

I cook them up for lunch with some butter, lime and pepper sauce - all done by me on a rocking boat, unless I have the luxury of a cook onboard. The log book usually reads "two fish on board at 10:30, lunch at 12:00, six charterers and the captain ate 12 pounds of fish fillets and 12 more pounds are in the cooler."

Editor's Note: Capt. Frank Papy lives near Hilton Head Island during the summer and spends winters in Islamorada, Fla., aboard his 1967 Morgan 34 Sky Bird. He has lived aboard and chartered sailboats for more than 35 years. He is the author of "Cruising Guide to the Florida Keys" and "Sailing: Impressions, Ideas, Deeds," among other books.

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a piece of shock cord rigged into the hand line so it won't be a such a jolt when the fish hits.

I make a gaff hook out of an old broom handle, using two hose clamps to hold an extra large hook on the end.

A pair of cotton gloves comes in handy for pulling in the line. I use a squirt bottle full of rubbing alcohol to shoot down the fishes' throats so they die instantly - I hope with a buzz on. This keeps us from bloodying up the deck and lets you get the hook out and back into the water as soon as possible, especially when in a school of fish.

I have gotten as many as a dozen mahi mahi in 30 minutes. Usually we eat some, put some on ice, and have been known to swap eight nice fish for two nights of dockage, eating and drinking at a local restaurant. But most of the time, after the first night, I'm limited to just eating at the restaurant, if you get my drift.



In my years of delivery work I have developed the reputation that, if you sail for Papy, you will always have fresh fish. It helps nowadays with good crew hard to find.

Sometimes on a big ketch I will run a small block and line up to the top of the mizzen so I can haul a clothes pin up. I



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Selected Area Fishing Events

September 2007

6-8 29th Annual Atlantic Beach King Mackerel Tournament, one of the largest all-cash tournaments on the East Coast, proceeds go to Atlantic Beach Volunteer Fire Department and Carteret County Sportfishing Association
www.abkmt.com

8 Starter Team Bass Tournament, two-person teams on the New River, average prize \$2,500 based on 50 boats, guaranteed \$1,000 cash prize. Open to public. Gottschalk Marina, Camp Lejeune. (910)451-8307