

CELLER

A PASSION FOR FINE WINES AND SPIRITS

SUMMER 2011

SPAIN
A PLACE IN THE SUN

QUEBEC TERROIR
GURUS TO THE GROWERS

TASTE TEST
SUMMER IN A GLASS

LAPRISE AND VÉZINA
TWO FOR THE KITCHEN

IN SEASON
LOBSTER



SAQ

NEW ARRIVALS: 45 WINES IN STORES MAY 19 AND JUNE 2

THE LURE AND LORE OF LOBSTER

LOBSTER FISHING IS A MAJOR OCCUPATION IN THE ÎLES DE LA MADELEINE.
SO WE DID A LITTLE FISHING OURSELVES IN THE ISLANDS – FOR LOBSTER LORE,
FACTS AND WINE-PAIRING ADVICE.



BY JOSÉE LARIVÉE

A memorable scene from *Annie Hall* has Woody Allen and Diane Keaton freaking out because they can't bring themselves to drop a couple of live lobsters into boiling water. But in the Îles de la Madeleine, opinions are divided as to whether lobsters scream with pain when they hit hot water.

"It's a myth!" exclaims fisherman Denis Longuépée. "There's a lot of water in a lobster and that noise is just the sound of steam escaping from the shell."

Johanne Vigneault, chef-owner of La Table des Roy and the youngest of 10 kids raised by a lobster fisherman, isn't so sure. Before boiling a lobster she turns it onto its back and strokes its abdomen to make it fall asleep. "Just to be on the safe side," she says.

One thing Madelinots all agree on, though, is that their *Homarus americanus*, which prefers rocky areas, is better than lobster fished from sandy sea beds.



Woody Allen as Alvy in *Annie Hall*: "We shoulda gotten steaks 'cause they don't have legs, they don't run around."

(While the islands are best known for their dunes, they're rocky too.)

"Lobster is a big part of my childhood memories," says Vigneault, who was a guest chef at the Montreal High Lights Festival this past winter. "When I was a kid and my uncles would come on vacation, we'd set up long tables outside and serve something like 75 pounds of lobster. We ate it in the shell, plain, with hot bread. In that sense, we were rich."

Vigneault grew up in the very same house in L'Étang-du-Nord where La Table des Roy is now located. Her father was forced to sell the home, but in 1986, at just 23, she purchased it back from the

then-owners, the Roy family – hence the restaurant name.

Her husband is sommelier Denis Lemoine, who comes up with wine matches for the dishes created by his favourite Madelinot. For example, he says, "with a lobster bisque appetizer, you need a powerful white." With her Retour de Pêche, featuring lobster, cod and halibut, he recommends a California white like Beringer's Alluvium or a Rías Baixas Albariño such as Martín Códax's. And with her surf-and-turf combo of lobster and young beef from the islands, he suggests a woody Mâcon, an Okanagan Chardonnay or, for patrons who'd prefer red, a Saint-Joseph or other Rhône wine.

TRAPPED BY PASSION

Lobster season in the islands kicks off promptly at 5 a.m. on the first Saturday in May. Boats stream out of Havre-aux-Maisons, L'Étang-du-Nord, Bassin,

THE LURE AND LORE OF LOBSTER *continued >>*



Johanne Vigneault, chef-owner of La Table des Roy (below), considered one of the best restaurants in the province.



Grosse-Île, Cap-aux-Meules, Cap-Vert and Grande-Entrée to each drop about 280 traps, going back in the evening to retrieve them. The fishermen will do this every day, except for mandatory Sundays off, for 10 straight weeks. Among them is Florent Vigneau, who started fishing with his father when he was seven and who now goes out with his own 25- and 31-year-old sons on the F. Doublet, named after François Doublet, one of the islands' earliest seigneurs. "Lobster prices were down last year and fishermen barely managed to cover their costs," Vigneau says. "It's passion that keeps us doing this. In the middle of a storm, when you're in

the trough of a wave, when you can't even see the islands anymore and you've lost 100 traps, you really have to hang tough and get through it somehow. But when there's a good wind from the southwest and you know that come Saturday night you'll be eating lobster before going to the dance – that's when you know it's all worth it."

Chef Vigneault has a soft spot for the islands' fishermen. Along with La Table des Roy, she also operates the Café La Côte in L'Étang-du-Nord. "When I get to the café at dawn, when the air smells of the ocean and I get to serve fishermen – that's my real paycheck." ■

CRABBY MOOD

Crab arrives on our tables before lobster because crab season starts in April. But quotas have dropped drastically in recent years, making crab rarer and more expensive. Crabmeat is more delicate than lobster meat and tastes sweeter, especially snow crab. Sommelier Denis Lemoine says crab calls for a different kind of wine than does lobster; one recommendation is a New Zealand Riesling. The edible crab, also known as the brown crab, has a sturdier texture and arrives at season's end in autumn; for it, Lemoine suggests a Sauvignon Blanc.

COOKING LOBSTER

To learn the best ways to cook lobster, we went straight to the experts: Madelinots.

STEAMED

There are hundreds of lobster recipes, but connoisseurs prefer simple steamed lobster. "The problem is lobsters are usually overcooked," says chef Johanne Vigneault. "I've come across recipes calling for up to 15 minutes of cooking! A one- to- two-pound lobster should be cooked for seven to nine minutes, 10 max. The lobster is done when one of the small legs comes off easily. And don't cook it in a deep pot filled with boiling water. Steam it in one inch of seawater. Boiled, it loses its flavour." If you're nowhere near the ocean, you can throw coarse salt into the water. Alternatively, the Quebec firm Salin'eau now sells bottled filtered seawater that can be used for steaming lobsters and vegetables.



BARBECUED

First steam the lobster for two or three minutes. Split it lengthwise, remove the stomach (the greyish sac in the head) and place the two halves on the barbecue grill, shell side down. Cook for three to four minutes, turn over and continue cooking for two minutes more. Fisherman Denis Longuépée serves barbecued lobster garnished with any fresh herbs he has on hand, such as cilantro, rosemary or parsley, plus a bit of olive oil or butter.

NOTHING WASTED

- Male and female lobsters taste the same. The female's tail is slightly larger than the male's, while the male has bigger claws.
- Lobster shells can be used in making bisques.
- Tomalley, the green substance found in the body cavity of lobsters, adds fantastic flavour to spreads, butters, sauces and dips.
- Lobster juices enhance risottos and bouillabaisse.
- The roe (actually non-fertilized eggs in the ovaries, located in the female's back and ranging from dark green to coral red when cooked) makes a colourful garnish for hors d'oeuvres. It's extremely flavourful too.
- The grilled lobster sandwich, containing homemade mayonnaise and a few chives, is an Îles de la Madeleine classic.



Lobster poached in spicy butter.

LOBSTER POACHED IN SPICY BUTTER

Ethné and Philippe de Vienne of the fine-spice emporium *Épices de Cru* (www.epicesdecru.com) in Montreal created this recipe.

4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 4 live 680-g (1 1/2-lb) lobsters
 - 5 mL (1 tsp) cumin seeds
 - 10 mL (2 tsp) fenugreek seeds
 - 15 mL (1 tbsp) long pepper (or black peppercorns)
 - 1 sprig fresh tarragon
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 2.5 mL (1/2 tsp) ground curcuma
- Spicy Clarified Butter**
(makes 710 to 945 mL – 3 to 4 cups)
- 908 g (2 lbs) unsalted butter
 - 1 medium onion, sliced
 - 4 cloves garlic, cut in half
 - 4 slices fresh ginger
 - 12 cardamom pods, cracked

DIRECTIONS

Butter*

In a saucepan on medium, melt the butter and skim off the foam. When the butter is translucent and has stopped foaming, add all the other ingredients and leave to infuse on low for about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat, let rest for 15 minutes, strain and store in a sterilized container (washed in high heat in the dishwasher, for example).

Lobster

Remove the meat from the lobster bodies, tails and claws. (Plunge the tip of a sharp knife straight down right behind the lobster's eyes and drain the water from the body cavity; remove the tail and cut it in half; remove the claws and crack them open.) Reserve in the refrigerator. In a saucepan on medium-low, heat the spicy clarified butter and poach the lobster meat in it for seven to nine minutes, or to desired doneness. Serve hot, drizzled with a spoonful of the spicy butter. (You can also poach lobster parts in the shell.)

* The clarified butter in which the lobster was cooked can be used in place of regular butter in other dishes. It will add delicious flavour to pasta, vegetables, mashed potatoes, risottos and sautéed fish and seafood. Clarified butter is particularly useful in cooking because it smokes only when heated to a very high temperature. It will keep for several weeks in the refrigerator and longer in the freezer.

WINE SUGGESTIONS

Pinot Gris goes well with spices in general and ginger in particular, says sommelier Véronique Rivest. She recommends Seresin's Pinot Gris (p. 68), with its candied-fruit aromas and faint residual sugar, as the ideal complement to this richly seasoned lobster dish.



SAFFRON-VANILLA CREAM SAUCE FOR LOBSTER

Johanne Vigneault, chef-owner of La Table des Roy in the Îles de la Madeleine, created this sauce for steamed lobster.

4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 60 mL (4 tbsp) white vinegar
- 60 mL (4 tbsp) white wine
- 1 French shallot, finely chopped
- 6 saffron strands
- 1 vanilla bean, scored lengthwise
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) 35% cream
- 60 mL (4 tbsp) lobster stock* (or fish stock)
- 150 g (5 oz) unsalted butter, cut into large pieces
- 1/2 French shallot, coarsely chopped
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Zest of 1 lemon

*Available in fish shops.

DIRECTIONS

In a saucepan, bring to a boil the vinegar, wine, shallot, saffron and vanilla. Let reduce by half. Stir in the cream and stock and again let reduce by half. Strain the mixture into a blender. With the blender on high, slowly add the pieces of butter and the half shallot. The sauce will become frothy. Season to taste and set aside, keeping warm. Just before serving, garnish with the lemon zest.

WINE SUGGESTIONS

In whites, sommelier Denis Lemoine suggests a robust Chardonnay such as that by Sicilian producer Planeta. In reds, he says a Burgundy Pinot Noir, whether a Côte de Beaune-Villages or other, would work well.