Lovely lobsters
—every which way but loose

by Sandra Phinney

Years ago, fishermen’s kids were embarrassed to bring lobster sandwiches to school for lunch. The rest of us eagerly swapped our baloney or peanut butter sandwiches, knowing full well we were getting the best part of the deal. It wasn’t until the late 50s that lobsters were featured in restaurants and garnered some respectability.

One of the popular dishes at that time, served in Yarmouth at Harris’ Seafood Restaurant, was Nova Scotia-Style Creamed Lobster. It consisted of a generous portion of chunked up lobster served with thick cream, butter, a splash of vinegar, salt and pepper. One evening, a customer asked Clara Harris if she would serve this with toast. Voila! The Hot Lobster Sandwich was invented. It’s still one of the best-selling menu items in Southwest Nova Scotia.

Lobster—the quintessential palate pleaser in Atlantic Canada—is not only synonymous with great taste, hospitality and good times, it’s also downright good for you. Homarus americanus is low in carbohydrates, high in omega-3, B vitamins, minerals and protein. Bonus: Lobster is one of the most versatile foods on the planet.

So, what’s the best way to cook these lovelies? For insider information I turned to Ernie and Brian Williams. They have the perfect outdoor set up at Stanley Lobster Co., a lobster pound on the Overton Road in Yarmouth. The brothers steam their lobsters...
using big pots, outfitted with grates about three inches from the bottom. "Put about two inches of salt water into your pot. If you don't have ocean water, add a handful of sea salt to the water," says Brian, adding that the important thing is for the water to be boiling hard. "That pot has to be steaming before you put lobsters into it. Then set your timer to 20 minutes for 1-pounders, and 24 minutes for 2-pounders. Guaranteed perfection!"

I once made the mistake of asking why they steamed the lobster instead of boiling them as it takes less time to boil them. Ernie quipped, "You don't boil your steaks do you?" So the next time I cooked lobsters at home, I steamed them. I'm now a convert. Steamed lobsters are juicier and have more flavour. Although, let's face it, lobster any-which-way is good. But I love going to Stanley's for a lobster feed because these guys are so entertaining.

Brian loves to explain the intricacies of a lobster trap. "See here," he says, "this is the kitchen. Over here is the bedroom and on the other side is the living room or parlour."

Cut lobster into chunks. In a frying pan, sauté lobster in butter for 1 minute. Add vinegar and stir. Add cream and stir until hot. Season to taste. Makes 2 servings.

Nova Scotia-Style Creamed Lobster

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Note: If making Clara Harris's Hot Lobster Sandwich, serve on top of (and between) 2-4 pieces of toast.

Tip: Can substitute 1 tin frozen lobster, thawed and drained, for fresh lobster. (see p.52)
Must-go lobster eateries

Atlantic Canada has a plethora of places that serve up lobster in amazing ways. Here are but a handful.

Ask the locals!

New Brunswick
Mike Bardsley Jr. owns Cap’n Mike’s Lobster Rolls and Seafood at the Fredericton Boyce Farmers Market. Mike shows up at the farmers market around 4:30a.m. and starts cooking and shucking lobsters for his famous lobster rolls. Service starts at 6a.m. and there’s always a line up.

In Escuminac, sign up for a Fisherman’s Basket at the Escuminac Wharf Authority. A local fisherman will give you tips on great places to poke around including dunes, clamming beds, and beachcombing spots. Your basket includes everything from bottled lobster and bar clams, to homemade bread and a bottle of regional wine.

Catch 22 Lobster Bar in Moncton serves a variety of signature lobster dishes such as Lobster Florentine (sautéed lobster, onions, mushrooms, and spinach in a creamy lobster sauce), and Lobster Thermidor (lobster and mushrooms in a white wine, tomato based sauce topped with Swiss cheese, served in the shell.) Heady stuff.

Nova Scotia
Rendez-vous de la Baie in Church Point serves a “wow” lobster chowder. This multi-purpose centre (theatre, gallery, Acadian Interpretive Centre and Museum) has a small Internet café with a limited menu—but lobster chowder is always available, and always a hit.

The Grill at Five Fishermen in Halifax serves a unique Lobster Cobb Salad. You can expect a generous portion of lobster salad surrounded with oven-roasted tomato, belly bacon, roasted corn kernels, romaine lettuce, topped with hard boiled egg, then laced with avocado vinaigrette.

Prince Edward Island
St. Ann’s Lobster Suppers in Hope River was the original lobster supper on the Island and is still going strong with that wonderful old-time church supper feel to it. Two other favourites are Fisherman’s Wharf Lobster Suppers (North Rustico), and New Glasgow Lobster Suppers.

For a dish that’s wicked and wonderful, try Island Lobster Poutine at The Brickhouse Kitchen & Bar in Charlottetown. French fries never tasted as good as this poutine, topped with squeaky cheese curds, lobster bisque, tomato and scallion.

Join fourth-generation Capt. Mark Jenkins on Top Notch Lobster Tours for an afternoon or evening sail, and learn first-hand what’s involved on board a lobster fishing boat. Bonus: Lobster dinner is included on board. 🍑