

A fishy love story

Celebrating the versatile and delicious haddock

By Sandra Phinney



Sandra Phinney



Plexel

Top: Jonathan Joseph, owner and chef at Ye Olde Argyler Lodge with his award-winning haddock chowder.

Middle: The versatile haddock.

Right: Vera Saeme's delicious Brazilian Style Fish.

Melanogrammus aeglefinus. Now that's a mouthful; easier to say haddock. Haddock reigns supreme in Atlantic Canadian kitchens. One reason is that it's easier on the pocket book than other seafood sensations such as lobster, scallops and halibut. Secondly, it can be prepared in more ways than you can imagine.

To find out just how versatile and tasty this fish is—and to score a few recipes in the process—just tag along.

First stop: the Windlass Restaurant, a sprawling old-fashioned diner located on the Chebogue Road on the outskirts of Yarmouth. Overlooking the ocean, it has a great view, along with some “right good” meals as they say in these parts.

Photographer Bill Curry and his wife Norma are frequent customers. Aside from appreciating the generous portions, they love the Friday special—smoked haddock. “Known in Scotland as finnan haddie—smoked haddock filets poached in cream, served with mashed potatoes—the Windlass does an exceptional job,” Bill says. “I have it almost any time we eat there on Fridays, which is quite commonplace for us!”

Bill also enjoys this dish because it reminds him of his Grammy Curry's finnan haddie recipe. Bill says some people use a combination of milk with cream, or thicken milk with flour or cornstarch. “But



Vera Saeme

Grandmother was a minimalist. She used only cream and I remember it getting thicker and thicker as it simmered. Then she'd drop in what today might be considered a scary amount of butter,” he adds.

Slipping into the town of Yarmouth, next stop is Murray Manor Art & Culture House, brainchild of art historian and world traveler, Vera Saeme. As the name implies, there's a whole lot of art here. Recently, Vera transformed the attached garage into a bistro café and turned five upstairs rooms into an Air BnB. What does this have to do with haddock?

Vera loves giving dinner parties. If you want a dinner catered in her lavish dining room, (also full of art) give her a call. For a walk on the wild side, request *Moqueca de Peixe* (Brazilian Style Fish.) It is made with



Bill Curry

Grammy Curry's Finnan Haddie ▲

- 1 lb (500 g) smoked haddock, skinned
- 1-1½ cups (250-375 mL) cream (should barely cover fish)
- Salt and pepper
- Butter

Put fish ("skin side" down) and cream into a heavy-bottomed pan, and warm over moderate heat 15-20 minutes or so, until fish flakes easily. Remove from heat, season to taste with salt and pepper, and add a bit of butter. Serve with mashed potatoes on the side.



Sandra Phinney

Above: Nancy Thompson with two popular haddock dishes at The Red Cap in Pubnico.



Right: Colourful fishing boats in Meteghan.



Dennis Point Café

Lemon Pepper Bits are an all-time favourite at the Dennis Point Café in Pubnico.

tomatoes, onions, green and red peppers, coconut milk, a little lemon and just a *souçon* of a Brazilian hot pepper blend made in-house. Vera says, "My guests are always surprised and enchanted."

Originally Vera made this dish with halibut as she needed a fish that would not fall apart. "However, it was expensive and not always available," she adds, "so haddock is the perfect substitute."

Heading out of town, take Route 3 and mosey along to Ye Olde Argyle Lodge, located in Glenwood, where you'll meet owner and chef, Jonathan Joseph. His smoked haddock and corn chowder won the most recent chowder smackdown at Devour! The Food Film Fest—the world's largest food and film festival, held each fall in Wolfville. This chowder is a rich, creamy, smoky experience. But that's not all: Jonathan's menu is loaded with delicious fish dishes.

Back on Route 3, a few kilometres further you'll come to Route 335. Turn right and follow your nose to the Red Cap Restaurant and Motel in Middle West Pubnico. Guests drive for miles for the Red Cap's signature dish—haddock with lobster sauce. For lighter fare, order poached haddock with lemon herb butter. If you're making this at home, it can be cooked in the oven (with water or wine) or on the stove. Serve it with a dollop of herbed lemon butter prepared ahead of time by mixing 1 pound of butter, zest of 1 lemon, 2-3 tbsp. fresh parsley, 2 tbsp. chives, 1/2 of a medium onion, finely chopped, 1 egg yolk, salt and pepper. This freezes well.

In Lower West Pubnico, take the Dennis Point Wharf road and drive

to the end to the Dennis Point Café. Bonus: while your meal is being prepared, you can gawk at the fishing fleet and see what's going on at one of the busiest ports in Eastern Canada. What's the best way to pan fry haddock? Flip fish in flour; dip in a mixture of milk and egg; roll in fine cracker crumbs; pan fry in a small amount of oil (not too long!); flip over, and repeat.

This year, the restaurant has three kinds of haddock "bits" on the menu: plain, lemon pepper, and parmesan cheese bits. If the stars line up, you might get recipes.

Coming out of Pubnico, turn right onto Route 3 again and carry on to Barrington Passage. Be on the lookout for Capt. Kat's Lobster Shack where you'll find entrées such as Haddock Piccata, Ooey Gooey Haddock & Lobster Bake, and Haddock Milanese, to name just a few. Two more all time favourites: Your Fish Is All Wrapped Up (a large soft tortilla loaded with haddock), and Kat's Catch Burger—a wicked combo of haddock and scallops.

Now, you may be wondering why the focus has been limited to this part of Nova Scotia. Last year, the province's haddock exports were valued at \$16.6 million. The biggest ports by landings and value were West Pubnico, East Pubnico, and Meteghan. So it seems fitting to go as close to the source as possible. Besides, fishermen know their fish, and where to go when they eat out.

So now we'll head to the Meteghan wharf in Clare. Over 500 fishers are registered here and the value of the annual seafood catch is upwards of 35 million dollars. Spin-off industries abound: seafood is packed, salted, smoked, dried, canned, and frozen throughout the region which stretches about 45 km from Salmon River to Saint Bernard. And, of course, haddock is dished up in many ways throughout Clare, in restaurants and pubs.

But something less known is that the cafeteria at Université Sainte-Anne features regular "Fish Fridays" which include a big feed of fish and the fixin's, plus beverage and dessert, all for ten bucks—including tax!

If you're camping, a visit to BCD Fisheries in Little Brook is a must. Albeit small, it's one of the best fresh seafood markets in the province. And there's nothing simpler than fresh haddock in a pan with a little butter over a wood fire. BCD also sells smoked and salted fish along



Sandra Phinney



Sandra Phinney

Smoked Haddock and Corn Chowder ▲

- 4 oz (125 g) bacon, diced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 leek split in half lengthwise and thinly sliced
- 1 large russet potato, diced
- 1 qt (1 L) fish stock
- 1 lb (500 g) smoked haddock in half-inch dice
- 2 cups (500 mL) corn kernels
- 3 cups (750 mL) heavy cream
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) potato flakes
- a little cooked bacon, crumbled, for garnish
- 1 bunch green onions, sliced thinly for garnish

Cook bacon until some fat is rendered. Add onion and cook until translucent, then add leeks and cook for a minute before adding potatoes and stock. Simmer until potatoes are almost cooked, add smoked haddock, corn and cream and bring back to a simmer. Thicken with potato flakes to desired thickness. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with bacon and green onions.

with a variety of shellfish. Note: they do not accept credit cards or debit, so have cash in your pocket.

There you have it. Mind you this is only a tiny smidgeon of what's available. You'll find lip-smacking haddock dishes prepared in fish trucks as well as five-star inns and resorts from one end of the province to the other. Ask the locals. They all know where to get a good feed of fish. 🐟



**TRADITIONAL
VALUES
SMOKIN'
TASTE**

J. Willy Krauch has developed a world-renowned reputation for producing the finest cold-smoked Atlantic Salmon since 1956. Delicious in flavour with year round availability. We ship throughout Canada & the U.S. **Order Yours Today!**

1-800-758-4412

www.willykrauch.com



