

Deep sea fishing a feast for eyes



**JOE FITZGERALD
CHASING PISCES**

The morning was cold as we ploughed through the Northwest Arm toward the entrance of Halifax Harbour. Wispes of stubborn fog still whirled over the calm water, dodging the strengthening rays of the rising sun. We passed a massive container ship as it inched its way toward the open Atlantic, our Cape Islander dwarfed by the plodding behemoth.

Deep sea fishing is a great way to enjoy a day on the water and explore the province's rugged coastline. Charters are available in every part of the province, and are relatively inexpensive.

While it's not the classic sportsman's idea of fighting fish, deep sea fishing gives those who try it an appreciation of the way of life that was so important to Nova Scotia in an earlier age.

It's also exciting: you never know what will appear from those murky green depths.

We shut the engines off before ex-

DEEP SEA FISHING FACTS

● As recently as 20 years ago, you could catch trophy-sized cod, haddock, and halibut deep sea fishing around metro Halifax. Sadly, these species are getting harder to find. Most charters out of Halifax produce mainly pollock and mackerel catches.

● While cod, haddock, and halibut provide excellent table fare, you may haul up some strange/unexpected creatures while deep sea fishing. Large sculpin, wolf eels and lumpfish may take your bait.

● Aside from actually catching fish, a deep sea fishing trip can be an awe-inspiring nature experience. In the late summer and fall, whales, porpoise and seals are common. Other visiting species that are sighted annually in Nova Scotia waters include ocean sunfish, basking sharks and sea turtles. Bring a camera.

iting the harbour, and took some fishing rods rigged with mackerel feathers. Drifting in the swells, three of us started jigging.

Within minutes, we were pulling up mackerel. This in itself was fun, but there was an ulterior motive for our pit stop. The captain took the mackerel we caught and began chopping them into bait-sized pieces, while a cloud of seagulls materialized out of nowhere, greedily slurping up the entrails of the gutted fish.

When I was a kid, I remember

deep sea fishing one summer. We caught big haddock, cod, and even a halibut. Our neighbour, who was with us, is an extraordinary cook from the South Shore, and I have a wonderful childhood memory of that adventure on the sea capped by a delicious feast she prepared for us of fresh, breaded fish and home-cut french fries.

Back in the present, skirting around Chebucto Head, we started fishing just offshore. Some of us used hand lines, while others used heavy-duty bait-casting rods. Large silver weights, the hooks baited with chunks of mackerel, were dropped to the bottom and then jigged up and down.

We began catching fish, but unlike that day years ago, there were no haddock or halibut. Swarming schools of pollock kept taking our baits.

While I hoped for a rogue halibut to strike my bait, a pod of pilot whales suddenly surfaced off the bow. Ironically, the whales were probably gorging gratefully on the same pollock I was cursing.

The spectacle was better than anything at Seaworld, and my frustration quickly subsided as the ebony giants provided a feast for the eyes.

chasing pices@hotmail.com

Joe Fitzgerald is a freelance writer living in Halifax.