As Season Opens—

Alligator Meat Hot Item

Alligator meat may well be the hottest commodity on the market this fall. This year trappers will be allowed to sell this secondary product of the reptile sought for its valuable hide.

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the National Alligator Association, and at least one major seafood dealer who will be handling alligator meat this fall, anticipate good reception of this unique food product. And, according to several expert tasters and local trappers who have long known the secret, alligator tail prepared properly, is delicious!

Favorite recipes seem to be traditional south Louisiana sauce piquante, fried tail and 'gator soup. The meat has been compared in texture and taste to veal, chicken, and pork. But though it is similar, 'gator has a flavor all of its own.

Alligator season is now open with hunting permitted in certain areas only, with consent of landowners, according to specific harvest methods, and following stringent regulations.

Areas open to hunting include portions of the parishes of Cameron, Calcasieu, Vermilion, Iberia, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Charles, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany.

Up until last year, only Cameron, Calcasieu, and Vermilion Parishes were open. This year will be the second season in which hunting will be allowed in nine additional parishes as a result of the reclassification of the alligator by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Hunting is strictly regulated through a special tagging and licensing system. Indiscriminate hunting of alligators anywhere in Louisiana or in the designated areas out-of-season is a violation of state and federal law.

Anyone considering alligator hunting must contact the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for details on regulations and requirements. Trappers selling the meat must adhere to Board of Health criteria.

Last year's alligator season was highly successful with 18,000 tags issued and a total harvest of 16,500 'gators. "We anticipate a similar season this year but with increased tag utilization," asserts Johnnie Tarver, assistant chief, fur and refuge division.

And, this year's season promises to be more productive for the trapper and more exciting for the consumer because of the new product on the market: alligator tail.