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CRAWFISH TALES

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This issue—our 7th to date—is really a double publication: a combination of the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting held in September at the Prince Murat in Baton Rouge, and the regular quarterly edition of CRAWFISH TALES. We hope you derive extra benefit from all the additional information printed here.

We've been occupied in the last few months almost exclusively with the FIRST INTERNATIONAL CRAWFISH TASTING & TRADE SHOW. This show—a grand amalgam of everything having to do with crawfish—will be taking place February 4, 1984 at the Hilton in Lafayette. Be sure your plans for the first weekend in February include a stop at the show; we know you'll have a great time! You'll find a more detailed account of everything that's going on at the show on page 15 of this issue.

During this past year, CRAWFISH TALES has grown into a full-fledged industry publication, and the material in it has been quoted in other aquaculture magazines, newspapers and journals throughout the country. We have introduced several design improvements and have others planned for 1984. I wish to extend my personal thanks to all of the people who have contributed to CRAWFISH TALES in the past year: to the advertisers and subscribers whose support and enthusiasm for the magazine have made working on it a pleasure, to Nadine Carlson whose tireless efforts as Advertising Manager have made further improvements possible, to Deanie Stewart without whose help this issue would never have gone to press, and finally, to the LCFA whose idea all this was in the first place.

Season's Greetings to all and best wishes for a prosperous New Year!

Jane Barcivv
LOUISIANA CRAWFISH FARMERS' ASSOCIATION
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POND MANAGEMENT NOTES

Flooding should be completed and harvesting should be in progress by now. Harvestability of the crop is not influenced if flooding is in mid-October but a December flooding would result in a "late" pond with little growth of newly hatched crawfish. Some areas have had excessive amounts of rainfall in the last three months which could have been beneficial or devastating. If it was the latter, keep a note of the problems of washouts and overflow. It cannot be corrected 100% now; however, it should be worked on with advice from the Extension Service and Soil Conservation officer.

A farmer will have to turn over his water 7-9 times during a season. Water is an expensive item, usually too much at times and not enough at other times. An ideal situation is a water storing canal located next to the ponds to trap water and circulate into areas of the ponds. It costs way more to crank up the main well than to operate some low-lift pumps to recirculate the water in different areas. Recirculating water will help to prevent water oxygen level from fluctuating--the oxygen should remain above 4ppm. Remember cold water is high in oxygen and hot water is low.

The farmer should be dipping with a net to check the different sizes of his crawfish. I would recommend 3 to 5 dips per acre with 3 different sizes in the majority of the dips. Prior to or at harvest, test traps should be checked with at least 1/2 lb. per trap for profitable fishing. You may want to increase the number of traps to 20 to 30 traps per acre. You may also want to compare various artificial baits and harvesting methods on a small scale.

--Warren Beaugh
County Agent
There will be a meeting for crawfish farmers on January 7, 1984 at Crowley High School in the Commons starting at 9:00 AM. The program will include inside presentations as well as a field demonstration of harvesting devices and traps. The inside presentations will last from 9:00 until 10:30 and will cover:

Marketing Outlook
Bait Referendum Update
Report on the Crawfish Tasting & Trade Show
Weighing, Storing, and Transporting Crawfish

After the program at Crowley High, the group will move to a nearby pond for demonstrations of harvesting methods and other interesting activities.

IN THE NEWS


Just to let you know that we're right up there among the nation's trend-setters, "Cajun cooking" figures at the top of the "in" list in both New York and San Francisco with an added note in the copy which says that "People are experimenting with all kinds of food. Popular in New York now: Cajun dishes with crayfish."

1983 OUTLOOK

In my 20 years experience of sampling crawfish in commercial operations, I don't think I've seen a better year. This year most people flooded in October when the weather was cooler and oxygen problems did not kill young crawfish. In addition, we have a large crop of carry-over crawfish; these are males and females that survived the summer in the burrow and medium sized crawfish that have not yet re-burrowed to produce young. These crawfish should have been caught at the end of the season but because of low prices were not fished from the pond.

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This machine is now available with foot controlled POWER STEERING, 55 AMP alternaters for night operations, and still uses NO OIL under pressure to contaminate crawfish or the ponds they live in.

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Forage is not as abundant as in previous years because of the lack of rain in August to germinate seeds. Most ponds were flushed to provide water for germination of seeds and the stands of vegetation were not as heavy as in past years. Set-aside acreage and PIK lands could not plant rice before August 1st. Some pond owners may have to bale rice straw or use hay as a food additive in February-March to ponds with high populations of crawfish. You can add 400-500 lbs. of hay per acre but it takes 6 weeks for the vegetation to "cure" and be available as a feed for crawfish.

Harvesting will be an important consideration to prevent overpopulation problems in the pond by April. Twice a day harvests should be begun as soon as economically feasible and the number of traps per acre should be increased to maximize trapping effort. Research has shown that in older ponds, 40 traps per acre run twice a day will produce maximum catch results. Remember: YOU CAN'T OVERFISH A CRAWFISH POND!

In some ponds with low populations of crawfish, pond owners may only fish once a day or once every other day in cool weather. We have some ponds that because of high populations and abundant food, can be fished twice a day in March-April to three times a day in April-May using 30 traps per acre. These are the ponds that report production at 2500 to 4000 pounds per acre.

Begin preliminary marketing contacts now, even though you may not be harvesting crawfish. From all indications this year should produce good quality, early crawfish from our ponds.

--Larry de la Bretonne
LA Cooperative Extension Service

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COMMISSIONER’S COMMENTS

Probably no more than 10 percent of those eligible to vote did so in the recent referendum to establish the Louisiana Crawfish Promotion and Research Board. But of those voting, the sentiment was overwhelmingly in favor of the proposal.

Those crawfishermen with receipts showing they purchased at least 100 pounds of artificial bait last year were eligible to voice their opinion on the proposal. We had 305 crawfishermen casting ballots with 288 voting for the quarter-cent levy on each pound of artificial bait sold and 17 opposed.

Producers from 21 parishes cast ballots. By far the largest number of voters were from the parishes of Assumption and St. Landry. The vote in Assumption Parish was 109 for and 3 opposed. St. Landry had 89 voting for and one against.

In terms of raw percentage the greatest opposition to the measure was from the crawfishermen in St. Martin Parish where 9 voted for and 7 were against. The remaining votes by parish included Acadia 13 for, 0 opposed; Ascension 1-0, Avoyelles 5-0, East Baton Rouge 1-0, Evangeline 4-1, Iberia 8-0, Iberville 5-0, Jeff Davis 10-3, Lafayette 3-0, Lafourche 5-0, Madison 1-1, Morehouse 2-0, Pointe Coupee 4-0, St. Helena 1-0, St. James 8-0, St. Mary 7-0, Tangipahoa 2-0, Vermilion 1-1.

Those bait users who do not want to participate in the program can ask for a refund. The department will collect the assessment in the same way as we do for our promotion and research programs for rice, soybeans, beef, and swine. The assessment is in effect for five years.

In another matter the board recently met and named its officers. Dexter Guillory of Eunice was elected chairman, Gerald Prejean of New Iberia will be vice chairman and Steve Wild will be secretary-treasurer. Wild and Guillory are representatives of the Louisiana Crawfish Farmers Association while Prejean

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represents the artificial bait manufacturers on the board.

Other board members and who they represent include Ted Falgout, Larose, LCFA; Clark Blanchard, Pierre Part, LA Crawfish Producers Association; the second position representing the producers is vacant; Chester Sylvester, Jr., Bunkie, Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation; Roland Andrus, Church Point, Processors; Emery Saulnier, Welsh, Louisiana Restaurant Association; and Anthony Lamma, Jr., New Orleans, New Orleans Retail Seafood Dealers Association.

IN THE NEWS

The November edition of AQUACULTURE DIGEST (Vol. 8, No. 11) is full of crawfish information presented in the form of synopses prepared by editor Robert Rosenberry. Bob depends extensively on reader contributions for source material, so the more information we get to him about crawfish, the more he’ll print about us in AD. Write Bob at 9434 Kearny Mesa Road, San Diego, CA 92126.

BOILED CRAWFISH

Into a 20 gal. boiling pot put:
10 gal. water
2 boxes salt
10 oz. bottle red pepper
4 cut lemons
10 onions

Bring to a boil; then add:
30 lbs. crawfish

Bring back to boil and boil for 7 min. Turn off fire and soak for 10 minutes. Spread on trays and sprinkle with Tony Chachere’s Seasoning Salt.

--Kay Cramer
The 1982-83 crawfish season in Louisiana will be the season talked about for years to come. Problems ranging from September storms flooding ponds to a boom year and low prices make lasting memories. These things have been cussed and discussed a lot recently. There is one good experience to come out of the season which seldom gets attention. It is that the low prices particularly for meat, were used in a way that opened up more out-of-state markets than ever before. Industry members generally passed along the lower price to new buyers in other states. This made crawfish a competitively attractive item even though many people were not thoroughly familiar with crawfish products.

The question for the future is to what extent will these buyers remain in the market when meat prices return to the levels of previous years. Will restaurant and chain store buyers be impressed enough with crawfish products to continue their purchases? Will 1982-83 prices "imprint" on buyers that crawfish products should be bought only when the "price is right"? We can only speculate on how firm some of the expanded markets will be in the future. I attended a September seafood trade show with over 300 buyers meeting in Chicago. Their comments were helpful in seeing problems ahead. Advice from several I spoke to is the subject of the remaining comments. As a farmer you may feel that marketing out-of-state is the processor's job. This may be true in the sense that they will have the product to sell. However, the newly appointed Crawfish Marketing and Research Board will soon put you in the position of playing a role in developing and directing new marketing efforts.

The first bit of criticism our industry needs to take to heart is that few buyers see crawfish as an industry. Some buyers are familiar with a few processors to call for products. However, the crawfish product needs to be brought before buyers like...
crawfish sellers have in the past run hot and cold on attracting new buyers. Buyers do not appreciate or understand why people try to sell them crawfish products only in certain years. The strength of the south Louisiana market is wonderful but serious out-of-state buyers want crawfish even when supplies are somewhat scarce. Pond production can be promoted as a supply stabilizer to our out-of-town contacts. Most seafood buyers not currently using crawfish still operate under the mistaken conclusion that crawfish come from moss draped swamps and are not available on a reliable basis because of environmental changes. This concern over repeat business of quality products can be attacked by basic buyer education programs. The stability added by ponds could change somewhat if prices and other conditions for soybeans, wheat and rice improve.

Seafood buyers are familiar with prices of shrimp, oysters, fish fillets, etc. and can get current quotes from numerous suppliers. It is not that they always shop for the lowest price but that all the price information on other seafoods helps them determine whether or not they are being charged competitive prices.

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They are generally interested in price information ranging from live and meat prices to their stability from year to year and within a year (season). When printing a menu, this information is useful in trying to set a meal price reflecting the average of their high and low costs. Remember, these folks are separated from crawfish country and will hesitate to add an item to their menu unless it produces a profit. For example, a general rule of thumb is that restaurant managers hold their food cost of a meal to no more than 40% of the menu price, preferably 35%.

When trying to develop new markets on a large scale, promotional material and training are critical. The July, 1983 National Grocers Association trade show produced a list of sales leads for seafood. Seventy companies specified sales leads with 45 (or 64%) of them indicating point of sales (POS) material was their number one need relating to seafood. Thus, the message is that when you try to develop new markets with grocers, be prepared to offer them recipe cards or display case literature aimed at helping the consumer understand how wholesome, low in calories, quick to prepare, etc. your product can be.

The restaurant managers had a number of hints on how to do business with them. Offer a quality product. So often they experience odor, texture, inaccurate weights, and other problems with seafood that they want to know if new products will be different. They for the most part are not equipped to do a lot of steaming or boiling of seasoned products. This means that live products will be harder to introduce. In the kitchen, live products produce drip water, some odor, require extra labor, and often require special cooler storage. Peeled and deveined meat, prepared dishes, or pre-seasoned whole crawfish appear to be the products which will dominate the out-of-state market.

Restaurant management too often view crawfish as an entree item. Diners are cautious about risking an evening's dining experience by ordering a main meal of some item about which they know very little. It will be useful to promote crawfish in new markets as an item which can fit somewhere on the menu other than as an expensive entree. The appetizer list is one way to go as appetizers are viewed as a treat or something extra when eating out. The cost would appear worth the risk to the diner. As one sharp manager noted, customers are more adventurous about appetizers because of before-dinner drinks. Most restaurants serving seafood have one or two seafood platters. The platter is a perfect place to attack new restaurant markets. The "king" or "captain's" seafood platter represents a larger platter than the house platter. These have soft-shelled crabs, frog legs, or something else on them to make them look...
MKTAS (CONT'D)

Fried crawfish can fit in here. It is particularly useful on a regular platter also because it makes the restaurant look different from the competition. Most people will try new seafood if it is fried as are most platter foods. They can also try crawfish in this way without risking an entire meal.

The restaurant managers I spoke to had identical feelings concerning point of sale or information of help to diners when making a menu selection. Among the items discussed include menu clip-on promotions for crawfish or table tents. They know the cultural heritage of French Louisiana is of interest to people and makes good promotional topics: the Cajun story, crawfish farming, looks like a mini-lobster, etc. are all appealing. Finally, a surprising point was the role given the waiter in a successful promotion of a new product. With a new product on the menu, you have to look at waiters as salespeople. The chef or the manager do not have the contact with the diner. Waiters should know something about craw-

fish farming, cooking, and be able to speak first-hand about how crawfish taste. So their message was—when promoting something new in restaurants, do not overlook training the manager to inform the waiters of the heritage and romance of crawfish.

Buyers are interested in crawfish. However, the industry is at a stage where the national market must be aggressively sought. I am convinced that additional national markets will be served, as an organized general education and promotion program gets underway.

—Kenneth J. Roberts
LA Cooperative Extension

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FIRST INTERNATIONAL CRAWFISH TASTING & TRADE SHOW

The FIRST INTERNATIONAL CRAWFISH TASTING & TRADE SHOW (to be held February 4, 1984 at the Hilton in Lafayette) got off to a terrific start with the most successful poster contest ever held in this area. It took a panel of judges nearly 4 hours to award Glen Clark of Duson the $1,000 prize for his winning design. The poster has been printed in a limited edition of 500, signed and numbered and sells for $35. Orders can be placed by calling 318/269-0573, but posters must be picked up at the offices of WRITING UNLIMITED, 711 W. Pinhook Road in Lafayette. The poster is going to sell out fast--advance orders have already been taken for 200, so if you want one, don't wait until the show to buy it--get it now!

Preparations for the show itself are clicking right along. More than half of the booth space is sold, and we have commitments for much of the rest. The restaurants participating so far include Cajun Cooking, Les Chefs de Cuisine (a Chefs' Association), Evangeline Steakhouse, Cafe Vermilionville, Randol's, Cajun Catering, Brandon's, Robin's, and Galine's. The Farm Bureau is also taking a booth where Mrs. Norma Jean Miller will be preparing her famous crawfish jambalaya. All of the restaurants participating so far will be sending a chef to do one 20-minute cooking demonstration.

The trade exhibit booths are also selling well. C.E. Shepherd will be there to demonstrate trap making; Creole Foods will be displaying their line of products; Tomco Manufacturing (the company producing Cajun Crawfish Jeans) will be present, as will CMI and Cardinal Advertising and Promotions. Deep South Crawfish Co-op, Bayou Land Seafood, Bon Creole, Riceland Crawfish, and Seafood, Inc. will be representing processors and distributors. Coca Cola has taken two booths to sell soft drinks, and the Hilton will be selling beer, wine, and hard liquor.

Having all facets of the industry represented is very important to our attempt to present the image of a vital and thriving business that knows what it is and where it's headed. We're planning the FIRST INTERNATIONAL CRAWFISH TASTING & TRADE SHOW as a combined public education and marketing show. We're working with the Department of Agriculture to bring in buyers and wholesalers from out-of-state so that they can get a picture of the