

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Georgian Bay

Left Kitchener, Ontario early with two grandbabies Hallie and Madison in the back seats. Had some directions memorized, I thought, others in great paper detail. Five minutes out and pattern for day was set. Wrong exit. “Head east we’ll cross the highway somewhere. Back onto 401, right exit for 407 connector then another wrong exit looping southwest instead of north. Retraced, and rolled into 410. By time van was finally headed north volume aft had increased significantly. First pillow fight of the day was in high gear. AJ finished with a phone conversation, slipped boisterous opera into the CD and turned the volume way up. If-you-can’t-lick’em-drown’em-with-sound.

We were headed for one of Canada’s premier vacation regions, Georgian Bay in Lake Huron. I’d heard about the area from boat owners who’d ventured north or taken the “great circle” trip up the Hudson through the locks and canals to the great lakes. Eyes would light up like those who’d been to Alaska. “Go there” they’d say.

We’d been invited by AJ’s cousin Corina whose island owning friends rented only to friends. She, husband Blaine, and two daughters, Inez and Morgan had been going to the island for some time and now were able to spend what Blaine calls “endless summers” there.

We drove about two hours up the excellent 410 King’s Highway to the jumping off town of Perry Sound, a shopping Mecca replete with huge grocery store, McDonald’s, Wal-Mart and Canadian Tire. Place was a madhouse. SUV’s with kayaks and canoes, pickups with trailered boats, cars and vans with tenting gear piled high. Line at gas station four deep stretched half a block. Popularity rang. We stuffed final provisions and blocks of ice into an already overloaded van. Pleas for simple packing had bounced off blank deafness. Outfits for every occasion. Shoes to match. This is a remote island. One woman, two in training! Blessings for the new knee.

North again. Promptly missed another exit. Had to drive six miles to find a 180 degree turn and then another missed turn. Finally found the last 7 of miles dirt road through the woods. Waiting at the dock were familiar faces and a short boat ride.

Awesome! Georgian Bay was formed in the pre-Cambrian era (I read that on a plaque, whatever it means). Quite simply Georgian Bay is a gorgeous piece of real estate. Some 30,000 islands of stone and granite with just enough top soil for trees. Muchly resembles the Maine coast, though many of the rock formations must have been thought up by a Jackson Pollock. Coal blacks buried in granite, white veins, quartz, limestone, lava flows in multi-colors all pushed and woven together. Water is so unbelievably clear the depth was hard to

reference. Season was a bit late so water was reputed colder than normal for mid-July. However, AJ and I both agreed, once in you could stay. No matter the cold, the ledges held heat from day before or soaked up new rays to make stretching out in lay-down position a luxurious feeling. Great for grandbabies who hated to get out of the water and whose lips were blue when they did.

Cabins were rustic perfect. As many spiders and flies inside as out, easily broomable, always returning. Five kids played and bicker competed, worked hard at improving their swimming. Amazing what they teach each other. We barbecued, fretted if there was enough food (brought some back), toasted marshmallows on mammoth bonfires, went for picnics, built rock cairns, caught minnows, polliwogs, bees, lightning bugs and bullfrogs. We witnessed legendary sunsets, we fished and swam till we could have grown gills and tried in vain to attract bass with worms, crayfish and grubs. We boated to hole in the rock marinas, hidden virtually to only local knowledge. We went for lunch and enjoyed fried perch, pickerel, whitefish, and walleye. Went to bed late and most mornings stayed lazy in bed while the eastern sun warmed the cabin.

Kids were introduced to the great joys of an early morning outhouse with the front door wide open and sun's rays warming the slight chill. Youngest grandbaby on seeing the three-gallon can of shavings—"Grump, what do we do with the hamster food?"

I explained that was to cover the poops.

"And Grump, guess what?"

"What Pooh Bear?"

"I can use all the toilet paper I want and it won't plug the toilet."

The island had been a sporting camp in the early 20s, fallen on hard times and purchased (or won in a card game according to family lore) by the Boggs family in the 40s. Added to or subtracted from (by a lightning fire over the years) there were now a total of five family cabins, appropriately named Cabin One through Cabin Five. Evidence of fifty plus years of island living was subtly noted by various abandoned dock areas—Great Lakes are receding—abandoned boats, canoes, and an old Volkswagen with trees growing through that someone had driven over on the ice. There was also an ancient leaning-over boathouse held up by a strategically placed 4 x 4. Motto is, 'fix only if necessary, spend all available time in enjoyment mode'. Good thinking.

A few times we experienced the 'Georgian Bay Rumble'. Thunder way off in the distance seeming to make the entire area shake ever so slightly. Within the hour black clouds would roll in. Lightning would flash. For a few minutes the sky gods would vent their frustration with wild rain and wind. As quickly came, as quickly passed and a clear crisp sun would follow. Photographer's dream. We took ten rolls and wished for more. Like kids in a candy store we couldn't get enough. Every time we'd turn a new corner there'd be a vista or photo-op, more miraculous than the last. Thank goodness the island was a mere 14 acres. I think we must have documented the heft of it.

We'll go back again. Perhaps by boat. We'll stay longer and take more film.

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Instead of boiling or steaming this summer's asparagus, try this approach. We find it by far tastier.

Roasted Asparagus

Serves 4

2 lbs. asparagus, tough ends trimmed
2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon cracked black pepper

Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, combine the asparagus, oil, salt, and pepper and toss together. Place on a baking sheet and roast in oven for 13 to 15 minutes, until slightly browned and crisp-tender.

Fair winds and good roads.

Lee S. Wilbur