

Clam Enchanted Evening

Written by Jack Sparacino

Wednesday, 29 August 2012 07:58 - Last Updated Wednesday, 29 August 2012 10:09



Well clamonomics fans, we've been very fortunate and have outdone ourselves this year. And with no injuries or buckets of clams left behind (yes, we somehow did that once, the entire day's harvest, and I'm still wiping the egg off my face).

Three of us went out to Coffin Point in early January, for example, and dug in gorgeous 65 degree weather for about 90 minutes, with short breaks woven in to soak in the beautiful beach scenery. These breaks were also useful ergonomically. Digging clams here is recreational but it's also work, so we stretch our arms, legs and backs and even adjust kneepads as necessary.

We harvested 408 clams that day, a record for us for a 3-man team. This equates to 136 per man, or 1.5 clams per man per minute (our previous record was a respectable, we thought, 1.2). Assuming a 50 cent per clam retail value, this amounted to \$204 worth of clams in 4.5 total man hours. Which translates to each person "working" for \$45.33/hour (with no taxes!) – again, a record for any team of ours. Much more importantly, we had a ball. Priceless.

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Relative to the real estate involved and conservancy, we estimate we worked a total of only about 100-200 square feet of beach. There appear to be many thousands of comparable beach miles nearby (not to mention the many miles of river and creek banks) that remain virtually untouched by clammers. Now for the great news. We plan to keep clamming 4-5 times per year and only touch 1% or so of the available shell fishing grounds.

This means that in reaching our goals we should be able to live well past 150. Holy clambake, Batman, this would set all kinds of longevity records and might even qualify us to make the cover of the Journal of the American Medical Association, AARP's monthly magazine, or, dare we hope for it, the venerable Geezer Digest. Maybe even Old Bivalve Guy Quarterly. Talk about something to look forward to!

Here's something else we always look forward to -- the "fruits" of our labors. Steamed or fried, Lowcountry clams are terrific. We also love this easy to prepare recipe for clam chowder. Try it for lunch sometime or, if you prefer, a good start to an enchanted evening.

Lowcountry Clam Chowder

You will need:

3 peeled and diced medium white potatoes

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1 large chopped onion

1 can whole corn (drained)

1 stalk chopped celery

1 tbs. hot sauce

1 tsp. each Old Bay seasoning, garlic powder, and tarragon □ 1 quart half and half

1 pint of heavy cream (optional)

Boil potatoes until just tender, drain and set aside. Sauté celery and onions in butter and set aside. Steam 50 well washed clams (100 or so for a two fisted batch) in a can of light colored beer. Remove clams from pot; chop them up. Continue to boil clam broth a few minutes to reduce by about 1/3. Add half and half to clam broth in pot. Stir in vegetables, hot sauce, and spices. Add chopped clams. Add heavy cream if desired. Taste, adjust spices as necessary. Serve with salad and warm corn bread. Makes 4-6 portions. Enjoy!

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