

Wild Harvest

Le' Lanchon: The Sand-eel (*Ammodytes dubius*)

That first shiver passing up through the handle told me that at last I had found the spot.

Drawing the rake head clear of the water confirmed the sensation as the silver eels slid off the tangs into the box and I reflected that at times like this, standing as I was waist deep in winter water, it made the effort all worthwhile.

As with many of the traditional low water fishing methods, raking for sand-eels can be a lonely pastime. However, for those that have the passion it brings its own rich rewards. Not only do you have the chance of catching your own food but you are also surrounded by fantastic views and given an insight into the amazingly abundant life to be found among the reefs. Though these bars of silver may not make your fortune, they will provide you with a meal which is hard to surpass.

Recipe:

- Remove and discard the heads and innards, rinse off and leave to soak in milk for 20 minutes.
- Dry lightly and coat in flour before deep frying (475F/ 230C). To maintain oil temperature only put in a few at a time.
- Serve with fresh crusty bread , spread with Jersey butter and wash it all down with a good, cold dry white wine.

Palourdes: Praires (*Venus verrucosa*) and Le Manchot: Razor Fish (*Ensis siliqua*)

I am a firm believer in putting into practice the saying: 'To kill two birds with one stone' especially when it applies to low water fishing, anything to save a bit of labour. Often when raking for praires I uncover razor fish which despite their shape are yet another form of clam. Both will give away their presence by squirting jets of water into the air as you come close to them and both are wonderful to eat.

While praires need to be raked for far out in the low water sands of the Royal Bay of Grouville, razorfish can be found much closer to shore and are a source of great fun when you include children in the fishing mix. Arm yourself with an old washing up liquid bottle filled with a very strong salt solution. Next, look out for jets of water shooting up or for a key hole in the sand and then squirt some solution down into the depression. With luck a razor fish will rise from the sands thinking that the tide has come in early. You must be ready to seize it though, as it will pop back into the sand just as quickly as it emerged. It will be well anchored into the sand so having taken a firm grip, draw it out very slowly, ease in back a little and then draw out steadily to avoid losing the lower portion of the foot.

Recipe:

- It is important to rid the clams of any sand or grit before cooking by soaking them for at least three hours in sea water.
- When they are ready, chop at least four cloves of garlic and fry lightly in butter. Make sure that the garlic is not burnt.
- Add the cleansed clams ensuring that they are not piled one on top of the other to prevent opening, pour in a quarter bottle of white wine per dozen, then the praires and steam for no more than four to six minute, dependant on size.
- Place all open clams into a bowl, discarding any that remain closed. Serve with the sauce and add finely-chopped parsley and raise a toast to wild food at its very best with a glass of dry white wine.

Bon Santé

