



Angler's Notebook

by Jerry Bush



photo-Jerry Bush

Lake Erie's steelhead fishing is not limited to tributary waters. Anglers who have not already winterized their boats should consider trolling calm waters, just off the mouths of tributaries. Hard-fighting fish stack up off the mouths while waiting for rains to elevate tributaries and create optimum conditions for entry. One large destination is Presque Isle Bay. Steelhead can be taken from bay waters by boaters trolling spoons and diving crankbaits from October through November. Shore anglers often catch steelhead by using heavier spoons that can be cast a good distance. Many steelhead are caught through the ice throughout the winter months.

Fishing murky streams is typical in Pennsylvania, especially as winter climate takes over Lake Erie. However, fishing somewhat muddy water is doable. Adapt to muddy conditions by going large and bright. Though more difficult to see, the fish did not go anywhere, and fish do not stop eating. Be determined. Steelhead need an obvious target to focus on. Bring lots of flash. It is also more difficult for fish to see you as well in muddy water.

Presenting a fly in a natural manner is not always easy. The movement of a fly tied directly to a leader or tippet is limited during its movement downstream by the restriction from the monofilament line. Tying an open clinch knot helps a fly behave more naturally during the drift. The key to the open clinch knot is that it does not clamp down on the hook's eye. Instead, the eye stays within a small, loose loop created and maintained as the knot eventually clinches tight to the

line, above the loop. The loop allows a hook to be loosely but firmly attached, so it can freely move about the loop as the fly is affected by subtle nuances throughout the drift.

Accurate casting is a challenge for Pennsylvania anglers as winter winds prevail. When fishing for Northern Pike and Muskellunge in these conditions, keep thinking tight lines when choosing optimum lures. Large spinner baits and heavy crankbaits give anglers the best opportunity to cast lures accurately along a tight line to land in targeted zones. Choppy water and wind will make loose line, finesse fishing practically impossible. Most bites will go undetected. Conversely, a bite administered to a good-sized lure that is being retrieved on a tight line will be immediately felt.

As winds become more prevalent, it is tempting to hang out in coves and spend your time where the wind is less challenging. While not entirely a bad idea, anglers may be missing some of the best action by ignoring drop-offs along points that extend into the lakes, helping to form coves. Most gamefish seek deeper water at this time of year, but these fish are not necessarily ready to flee to the deepest water. Each species is looking for its preferred water temperature, but it needs to remain close to food sources. While fishing drop-offs, pay attention to where the drop bites are experienced. Fish around the point at roughly the same depth, assuming it makes sense in regard to available food sources.

Fishin' from the Kitchen

Roasted Pike with Gremolata

by Wayne Phillips

Bring summer freshness to a winter meal by topping roasted pike with zesty gremolata.

Ingredients for four servings:

- 4 6- to 8-ounces boneless, skinless pike fillets
- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Gremolata ingredients:

- 1 cup Italian parsley, finely minced
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Procedure

Mix the gremolata ingredients together. Let it stand for 30 minutes, so the flavors can combine. Brush the olive oil on the pike fillets. Place the fillets in a glass baking dish. Bake

in a 350-degree F oven until cooked through, usually about 15- to 20-minutes. Season with salt and black pepper. Spoon some of the gremolata over the pike.

Serve

Serve over a bed of fusilli or other short pasta dressed with a light tomato sauce.

Tips

To avoid overpowering the pike, make your pasta sauce by mixing half cream and half tomato sauce for a more delicate rosé sauce.

To perk up any fish dish, try topping it with a spoonful of gremolata. It brings the freshness of Italian flat leaf parsley, the robust taste of garlic, the zip of lemon, and the peppery zing of extra virgin olive oil. Make it your own by varying the amounts of the basic ingredients.

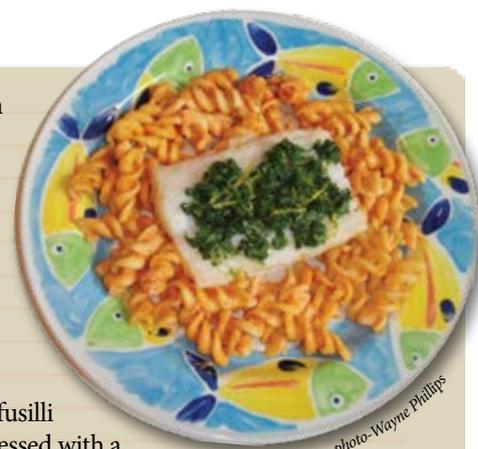


photo-Wayne Phillips