

Every other month, Ric Smith and Steve Downey of specialist ingredients supplier Ritter Fresh share their sourcing expertise and hand-pick an exclusive recipe to show off the best seasonal produce



Canadian lobster tales



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Lobster is now seen as a rich and decadent food but this hasn't always been the case and in centuries gone past you couldn't give the stuff away. A bit like oysters and wild salmon over here in the nineteenth century, Canadian servants would have contracts whereby they would only have to consume lobster twice a week rather than at every meal which their bosses would have preferred.

The earliest recorded catch of lobster in Canada was back in 1605 and apparently you could just pick them up off the beach at low tide. Before they were trapped in European style cage-traps they were speared. Always more active at night, some ingenious ploys were deployed. I love this one: a slick of oil was laid on the water to simulate darkness and cod heads were left on the sea bed. When the lobsters swarmed around in their hundreds they were speared at leisure. There were so many that children going

Hero in a half shell:
The Canadian lobster



to school with lobster sandwiches were considered the 'poorer kids'.

Gradually a commercial market emerged and one where speared lobsters with holes fetched a lower price. Before long all lobsters were trapped in 'pots' as we know them and by the 1700s they were being shipped to market in clever boats

called lobster smacks that had open wells on deck with fresh sea water running through. In 1872 live lobsters were being delivered to 44 canneries along the Northumberland Strait and by 1900 this had grown to more than 900 canneries taking catches from thousands of boats. As lobster grew

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in popularity the biggest change occurred in the market as demand for live product rocketed. By 1930 the 900 canneries had dwindled to a mere handful.

It takes seven years for a lobster to grow to takeable size and they can live to over 100 years growing to a ridiculous 20.13 kilos, which is the record landed in 1977. This Atlantic coast fishery encompassing the US and Canada is worth hundreds of millions of dollars a year and is going from strength to strength as demand from Asia and India rockets. It is an outstanding example of a well-managed fishery and as long ago as the 1850s fishermen were voluntarily returning all females carrying eggs. Michael Lynch has provided us with a recipe to illustrate just what wonderfully versatile seafood these are.

LOBSTER AND MONKFISH CURRY BY MICHAEL LYNCH

Bentley's Oyster Bar & Grill
11-15 Swallow Street
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Ingredients:

- 2 onions diced
- 1 stick of lemongrass, chopped
- 1 lime leaf
- 50g ginger, finely diced
- 2 red chillies, finely diced
- 2g sea salt
- 10ml rapeseed oil
- 50g Indian bhuna spice
- 2 tins coconut milk
- 10 vine tomatoes, blanched, peeled, seeds removed and diced
- 10 black peppercorns
- 6 cardamom pods
- 10g coriander seeds
- 2 Canadian lobsters
- 4 140g portions of monkfish



Transformations: Michael Lynch works his magic at Bentley's Oyster Bar & Grill

► For the curry sauce, gently sweat the onions, lemongrass, a ginger chilli with the salt for 5 minutes or until soft. Add the diced tomatoes and cook for a further five minutes
► Add the Indian bhuna spice, cook for 1 minute more then stir in the coconut milk. Tie the



Twice as spice: Lynch's lobster and monkfish curry

whole spices in a muslin bag and add to the pan. Bring to a gentle simmer, remove from the heat and leave to infuse.
► For the lobster, remove the claws and head from the body and split the tail lengthways down the middle. Blanch the claws for 7 minutes in boiling

salted water and remove the meat. Take the tails and roast in a pan flesh side down for 1 minute then turn and cook for a further 1 minute shell side down and remove from the pan and set aside
► Sear the monkfish in the pan until golden on both sides

► Place the lobster tails, claws and monkfish into the curry sauce and gently simmer until cooked
► Serve with infused Himalayan rice and the fresh mint, coriander and spring onion along with the Greek yoghurt