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CANOE'S DEADLIEST CATCH

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

A fan of Discovery Channel's top-rated show "The Deadliest Catch," Carvel Grant Gould, executive chef at Canoe, ventured to Dutch Harbor, Alaska, in late October to participate in the opening of king crab season. She experienced the entire fishing process first hand. The Sunday Paper caught up with Gould to learn more.

Q Why risk such a "deadly" trip?

A I've always been a big fan of the show, and I also know how unique a product fresh king crab is. Just being a chef and a fan of the show, I just knew the experience would be something fabulous.

It's a long trip—quite a number of airplane transfers from Atlanta to Dutch Harbor, which is in the middle of nowhere—about a three-and-a-half-hour plane ride from Anchorage and 120 miles from Japan. It was occupied during World War II, and the whole island is still covered with machine guns and rivets and bomb shelters and horses that our army left there and are now wild. It's pretty fascinating. I think Dutch Harbor is 25 miles across—it's a small place. The weather changes every five to 10 minutes; incredible winds make it difficult to fly in and out of there. But it's a great harbor because it's right at the Bering Sea.

The whole crabbing thing is relatively complicated. The government dictates the quota for the year [this year it's around 20 million pounds]. Up until two years ago, it was derby-style fishing, so if one boat got 60 percent of the government's quota before anybody else—because you have to report your haul and once the quota is met that's it—that boat could come away with ridiculous amounts of money. Some deck hands could walk away with \$40,000 for three days of work. It was part of the community and culture and part of what made it so deadly because crews weren't sleeping or eating. Now the quota is divided up more or less equally among boats before they go out, which, in turn, has boats going out intermittently.



Carvel Grant Gould, executive chef, Canoe

SPARK ST. JUDE

The Bering Sea has treacherous waves and swells. Losing 18 people off of separate boats in a year is not completely abnormal. People die every year—they're out on a deck and 40-foot swells come over the boat. You're very easily swept overboard, and everything out there is iced over. I don't know the exact temperature, but I think you can last all of three minutes.

The way crabbing works is sort of dependant upon luck because crabs move around. Red king crabs are four to five feet across and move about 20 miles a day. You have to set your traps where you think they might be going and then leave them there and hope there are crabs in them when you go back.

It takes a day and a half to get way out to where they're going to fish. I did go into the Bering Sea on two different boats, but the seas were very calm on both days, and I didn't go way out. I think once you get much further out that's where it gets really crazy.

Crabs have to be kept alive at all times. If a crab dies, the meat is destroyed; it becomes mushy and inedible. The whole time at sea, the hull of the boat is filled with seawater so all the crabs that are caught are stuck there to swim around until the boat docks and then they're sent to the processing plant to be cooked alive.

Is king crab on the menu at Canoe?

I'm not interested in serving frozen king crab at all, nor will I ever—freezing really changes the flavor and texture. We might see fresh crab into December; that all depends on if they're able to fly out that day. I can't predict which days I'll have it, but I have it scheduled to come in Wednesday through Saturday.

One of my favorite preparations is an appetizer. I take the crab out of the shell and serve it with a butter lettuce emulsion with dry mustard, honey and extra virgin olive oil, topped with extra virgin olive oil sorbet. **SP**

Canoe is located at 4199 Paces Ferry Road NW. For more information, call 770-432-2663 or visit www.canoeatl.com.