

Crabbing on *Trippe Creek*

★ Story by Eric Vohr, photos by Michaela Urban

I've been sailing on the Bay for a long time and have sadly never really mastered crabbing. My first attempts were with a collapsible trap. I bought one of those circular ones that lies flat and turns into a mesh bowl when you bring it up, supposedly to trap the crab feasting on the chicken neck tied to the center. I have used that thing a lot of times, and I only caught one crab: a small guy with only one claw. The other problem with this kind of trap is that the boat swings at anchor and the line gets all tangled up (I finally lost that trap when the line got tangled in my rudder).

On this trip, a friend was going to lend me a couple of portable traps of a different design that I hoped would do the trick. Unfortunately, he didn't get to his storage before we left. So, without any "gear" onboard and determined to catch some crabs, I started to think seriously about the old string and chicken-neck method. To be honest, my friends who grew up on the Bay rave about it, but my Yankee skepticism and inexperience kept me from giving it a try, I mean, why would a crab just hold onto a piece of meat and let you catch him? It didn't make sense.

However, with no other alternative, I grabbed some string I had on the boat and tied up a couple of steak bones I

had saved from our meal on La Trappe (see October SpinSheet page 57). It took a while to master the technique with the swinging boat. But I finally settled on a program that seemed to work well. I put a couple of lead weights on the end of the line to give it some heft, tied the steak bones to the line close to the lead, and then chucked it far enough off the stern so it did not get tangled in the rudder.

I don't know why I ever doubted this time-tested technique; I pulled in a medium sized male on the first throw, and they just kept coming. We caught so many crabs we started throwing back the smalls. It was a perfect system and a lot of fun. We just hung out on the cockpit, drank wine, played cards, and every once in a while, checked the line. We worked as a team: one would reel it in and the other would snag it with the net.

My next worry was whether I had a pot big enough to fit them in. I used to have a nice crab pot on the boat, but when I started racing, a lot of that stuff went into storage. We made it work with a medium-sized pot and a big pan,



■ The author and his catch of the day.

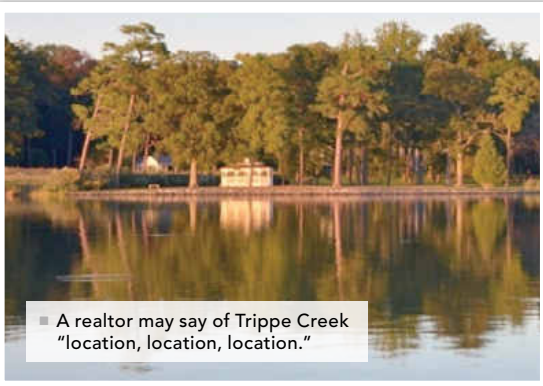


■ Steamed crab ready to be eaten.

lots of Old Bay, and voilà. It's really not that hard.

If you don't have a wooden hammer, a pair of channel-lock pliers or vice grips work just fine to break the claws. But one little piece of advice: when you eat crabs on a boat, do it outside. We ended up crabbing until after dark, and as it was blowing outside and cold, we decided to eat in the main saloon. I spent the entire rest of the evening cleaning crab juice and bits of shell from the inside of the boat. And I had just gotten new cushions, so it was a little bit of a stressor.

If you have never had crabs fresh out of the Bay, you must do it. It's not only great fun, but it's also a free meal. Of course, as we later learned, we were not as lucky in all of our anchorages. In fact, the Trippe Creek seemed to be a magic spot. I think with all the mega-mansions here, these folks probably get their crabs at the supermarkets and not with a line and a chicken neck. ■



■ A realtor may say of Trippe Creek "location, location, location."

Where: Past Oxford on the south side of the Tred Avon River. 38.7079, -76.1397

Why: Great crabbing; Good anchorage; Peaceful with little boat traffic.

Drawbacks: Lots of modern mega-mansions.