

## Minaki Ontario 2010 – Fishing and Feasting



“Tim, I’ve got a good one on!” shouted Tom Parker to his brother.

“It’s a real good one!” shouted back Tim Parker.

It was June of 2010, and the Parker brothers had made their annual trek to Minaki, Ontario with six good friends. It was to be a week of good fishing, five-star dining, and unlimited camaraderie. Base camp was Paradise Cove Park, Minaki, the group’s choice for the last several years.

“Oh, my God! Look at the size of that thing! I better get the net ready,” blurted Tim.

The fish broke water several times as Tom’s heart was ready to pound a hole through his chest. “I better not screw this up,” he nonchalantly said to his brother.

Meanwhile, back at camp, five-star chef extraordinaire Chris Kaminsky was beginning dinner preparations. Trained in New Orleans, Malta (a small Mediterranean county), Chicago and other places around the world, he brought to our fishing camp what you only see in very expensive restaurants: courses of unbelievable creativity, texture, and appearance. His dishes tend to run on the spicy and rich sides, and his plating is something probably never seen that far north in a fishing camp. Wow.

Tom continues to fight his fish as Tim stands by ready with the net, but the fish is too green to be landed.

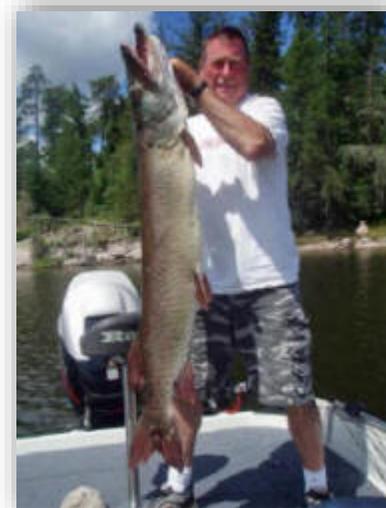
Back in the kitchen, Chris decides on this menu for the night’s dinner: Guinness braised biscuit of beef, roasted garlic mashed potatoes with chives and buttermilk, jumbo seared scallops with pancetta and pesto cream sauce, spinach and endive salad with golden raisins and honey mustard dressing, multi-grain bread, and chocolate walnut brownies for dessert.

Have you ever been to a fishing camp and ate like that for seven days? And had the meals cooked by one of your own party members?

Meanwhile, back in Parker’s Ranger, 45 minutes after it hit, a BIG musky is deftly netted by Tim. And BIG it is: 54” inches of a rough and tough ‘lunge. Tom’s lure: a #3 Mepps Black Fury, a small inline spinner maybe three inches long at best. And caught on 10# test line, to boot. The fish were in a negative mood, so they downsized, and it paid off big time.

The fish was pretty stressed by the time it came to the net, so it was just measured and photographed. It didn’t need the additional stress of hanging on a scale, so the boys released it, had to work it a while, but thankfully it finally went, hopefully off to make another angler happy someday. Kudos to them for good sportsmanship.

Other group members included Dick McNutt and Jim Eveland, Chris’ fishing partner Steve Downey, my brother John Zegar and me. We ate like kings. Or maybe pigs. McNutt, an early riser, was the breakfast cook. And every morning it was an all-you-could-eat buffet with traditional breakfast items.



We had two shore lunches which the Parkers managed. Walleyes were killed, filleted, and deep fried for our delicious consumption. There is nothing quite like cooking up a bunch of fish on a picturesque island overlooking a spectacular body of water. And after that? A little snooze on the softness of moss, a needed rest after fishing in the hot sun all morning and stuffing your belly with the bounty of the water.

The cottages at Paradise Cove Resort are the finest I’ve ever seen in 40 years of going to Canada. They are huge, four bedrooms each, two baths, a huge kitchen/dining area, and a marvelous screened-in porch right at the edge of the water. The porch was home to many card and dice games, along with regaling tales of fish caught that day.

The cottage is so spacious that we invited guests for dinner, to share in the finest cuisine of the north. Camp owner Duane Hell and his family were guests one

evening, and they were treated to this fare: Appetizers of smoked salmon with capers and dill, pickled green tomatoes, fruit and cheese supported by pinot gris wine. The main event consisted of beef tenderloin with foie gras and mustard green peppercorn demi glaze, pastrami spiced rack of New Zealand elk with huckleberry compote, orchietta pasta with crawfish, lobster, and shrimp in a light cream sauce, and grilled romaine lettuce with olives, feta cheese, and roasted red peppers with a sherry honey mustard vinaigrette dressing. If that wasn't enough, these desserts delighted the palate: flourless chocolate cake, and caramelized bananas.

I could write a lot about the great fishing there for walleyes, northern pike, muskellunge, and smallmouth bass. But why? You already know it's good. This column is about eating!

We have some great neighbors from Minnesota who we see every year there, so we decided to invite them over for dinner. They stay in the cottage next door. For appetizers, there was a sumptuous duck pesto pine nut pizza along with fruit and cheese. The main courses consisted of spinach Belgian endive salad with toasted almonds, goat cheese, and a warm apple wood smoked bacon dressing, crab encrusted baked walleye, roast leg of lamb topped with an olive, feta cheese, and rosemary watercress salad, and fingerling potatoes. Dessert was nothing less than grilled double pound cake with chocolate sauce.



Oh, my gosh. What a week of indulgence.

Paradise Cove Park in Minaki, Ontario rates an A+ in my book. The fishing is excellent, the body of water extensive, the accommodations top notch and reasonable in price, and the owners give good service. For more information, contact Duane Hell at 807-224-1107 or visit their website: [www.paradisecoveminaki.com](http://www.paradisecoveminaki.com)

Oh, about the food. What we ate doesn't come with the accommodations. You have to bring your own chef!

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