Definitions starting with C

Conch

Conchs are very abundant in the warm seas around the Bahamas. They are gastropods with foot-long shells resembling those of snails, and they have always been one of the Bahamians' favorite foods. The loyalist refugees who came from the American mainland in the 1780's called the natives CONCHS for this predilection, and CONCHY JOE is still a very current term for a white Bahamian. The variety preferred for food is the PINK CONCH, while KING, QUEEN, and LAMB CONCHS are collected for their beautiful shells, used to decorate everything from lamp bases to walls. The flaring pink lip of such conch shells is cut to make cameos and other jewelry. Other varieties include the COURAGE CONCH, HORSE CONCH, LIME CONCH, PEPPER CONCH, PORGIE CONCH, REEF CONCH, SCREW CONCH and TWIST CONCH; there is also the BROAD-LIP or THICK-LIP conch as opposed to the THIN-LIP. Old discolored, worm-eaten ones are called HAG or SAMBO conchs.

Bahamians DIVE conch or HOOK conch with the GRAINS; they must be kept alive if they are to be eaten, so they are either kept in a CRAWL in shallow water or tied together with several others until needed. To extract the edible creature from its hard shell, the tip of the spiral is chipped off with a CONCH-BREAKER (or CHOPPER); then with one hand one grasps the HORN (or CONCH-EYE, CAP, HELMET or SPUR) while the creature is JOOKED out with a knife. The BUSBY (or DUG) and SLOP are cut off, after which the conch can be eaten raw—either SCORCHED and sprinkled with lime juice, or diced and mixed with hot peppers in CONCH SALAD. It can also be tenderized with BRUISER and fried for CRACK CONCH, or cooked as STEAM CONCH or chowder (see Burrows 1979). Deep-fried conch FRITTERS are favored at parties and church cook-outs; they are famed for reviving exhausted Junkanooers as dawn lends Nassau more sober tones. Before refrigeration, conchs were frequently preserved by drying. Some Bahamians still do this, preferring the stronger flavor over that of fresh conch for OKRA SOUP and other stewed dishes. The Live animals are hung up while still in their shells; when dead, they are removed from their shells, BRUISED, rinsed in salt water, then hung to dry in the hot sun for several weeks. Before it can be eaten, this BAHAMA HAM (also called HURRICANE HAM from its use in emergencies) must be soaked for a day or so and boiled at least an hour. With the tip of its spiral removed, the CONCH-SHELL (or BLOW-CONCH) serves as a horn for signaling, a use that goes back many centuries. The length of time that conchs have been put to gastronomic use is suggested by the mountain of empty shells that had accumulated in Nassau harbor before it was recently used as landfill.

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