

SUNDAY GAZETTE

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HISTORY

COD ALMIGHTY



TAUNTON GAZETTE PHOTOS BY DAVE DEMELIA
ABOVE: Dr. Manuel DaSilva looks at the cod fish, also pictured top right, hanging at the Dighton Rock Museum.
RIGHT: Dewey Desrosiers, co-owner of Codfather's Seafood restaurant, prepares a meal of cod.

The history and industry of state's most celebrated fish

By CASEY NILSSON

cnilsson@tauntongazette.com

To Dr. Manuel Luciano da Silva, cod is king.

"It is the crown, the motif, the inspiration for why navigators came to these lands," da Silva, Dighton Rock director and founder of the

Academy of Codfish of New England, said. "Cod is king. It was then, and it still is."

INSIDE

A timeline of cod's history in New England.
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The Commonwealth's Cod Legacy

Da Silva isn't the only codfish zealot in the commonwealth.

In 1895, state Rep. Richard Irwin, of Northampton, said cod "tells the story of struggle and privations of Pilgrim and Puritan, whom many times it relieved



"(Cod is) indispensably necessary to the accomplishment and the preservation of our independence."

— Civil War General Charles Francis Adams

FAST FACTS

ATLANTIC COD CHARACTERISTICS

- **Heavy-bodied** with a large head and blunt snout
- Has a distinct, **whisker-like barbels** under the lower jaw
- **Omnivorous**
- **Coloring** varies, but most have small spots and a pale lateral line across their body
- Can be found in the **Atlantic Ocean** from Greenland to N. Carolina
- **Populations** are highest in two New England areas: The Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank, which separates the Gulf of Maine from the Atlantic Ocean
- Life span can be longer than **20 years**
- Can live close to **sea floor** or in **surface waters**

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COD

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in want and famine.”

Irwin and two other representatives, Ernest Roberts and James Gallivan, served on a committee charged with writing down the history of the Sacred Cod, a wooden cod model hanging in the hall of the House of Representatives.

Since the early 1700s, the Massachusetts House of Representatives chambers has maintained a real-life model of the Atlantic Cod, the fish that sparked the designation of Cape Cod in 1602.

The first House of Representatives Sacred Cod was destroyed by in a fire in 1747. The second Sacred Cod was destroyed during the British Siege of Boston in 1775.

In 1784, Mass. Rep. John Rowe offered a third Sacred Cod carving to be placed in the House of Representatives chambers. The model would serve, Rowe said, as a continued homage to the fish that swarms the seas surrounding Massachusetts.

In 1798, a new State House was built and the sitting representatives debated whether or not to bring Rowe's Sacred Cod along to the new chambers.

“Of course there are representatives that are always against ideas,” da Silva said.

In defense of the move, Irwin, Roberts and Gallivan said in their 1895 report that the Sacred Cod “rides serenely the sound waves of debate, unperturbed by the ebb and flow of enactment and repeal or the desultory storms that vexed the nether depths of oratory.”

Through the use of various examples, the report listed cod's significance in Massachusetts.

“The first product of American industry exported from Massachusetts was a cargo of fish,” the report said.

The committee also cited an article by Civil War General Charles Francis Adams, who deemed cod “indispensably necessary to the accomplishment and the preservation of our inde-

“The fishermen have been crying, but from what I understand, this year is better than last,” he said.

Desroisers was alluding to many restrictions placed on cod fishermen in New England that limit their cod intake.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service,

IF YOU GO

Dedication of a new Sacred Cod model

WHEN: Today, at 2 p.m.

WHERE: Dighton Rock Maritime Museum, Bay View Ave.

COST: Free

MORE INFO: www.dightonrock.com

commercial and recreational cod fisheries are managed under the New England Fishery Management Council's Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

Atlantic cod are one of 15 groundfish

species managed by area closures, gear restrictions, and minimum size limits under the FMP. Since 1994, the FMP has been enforced by a moratorium on permits and days-at-sea restrictions. Trip limits are also in effect for both Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank cod, two major cod habitats in New England.

In 2010, catch limits and caps were set in an effort to end overfishing and continue rebuilding the New England codfish populations. Coincidentally, in 2010 the Gulf of Maine was officially deemed not overfished.

Although much of the Atlantic cod population is protected under the FMP, Massachusetts' favorite fish is still finding its way to tables every day.

The Academy of Codfish of New England, founded by da Silva, has several cod dinners throughout the year. August 22 will mark the 129th cod supper since 2000.

The Academy's main goal is to “promote the greater awareness among the public that codfish is one of the healthiest foods of New England,” according to their website.

Da Silva, 85, a retired medical doctor, stressed that cod is more nutritious than most common foods.

He said cod is a fatty fish with linoleic acid and omega-3, both of which help lower bad cholesterol. He also said cod is rich in calcium, phosphorus, potassium and vitamins A, D and complex B.

TIMELINE

COD'S LONG HISTORY IN MASSACHUSETTS

1602 Cape Cod is named by English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold, who visits the shores and takes aboard his ship a “great store” of cod from the surrounding waters.

1693 In one of the first attempts at cod conservation, the Massachusetts General Court orders farmers to stop using cod as a fertilizer.

1747 The first Sacred Cod, placed in the Old State House in the early 1700's, is destroyed by fire.

1773 A second Sacred Cod, painted by Thomas Crafts, Jr., is placed in the new State House.

1775 Craft's Sacred Cod is destroyed in the British Seige of Boston during the American Revolution.

1784 Mass. Rep. John Rowe offers a third Sacred Cod carving to be placed in the House of Representatives Chambers.

1798 A new State House is built, and Rowe's Sacred Cod is hung in the House of Representatives Chambers

1840 The fishing industry peaks, with nearly 1300 total vessels and 12,000 employees

1895 Members of the House of Representatives debate whether to move Sacred Cod with them to new House chambers; a committee of three representatives write a report in favor of the move, and the Sacred Cod has resided in the chambers ever since.

1920's New and sophisticated methods for codfishing are developed, including gillnets and dragners.

1953 The International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries, now the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, takes lead on research and management of fisheries in the Northwest Atlantic.

including Atlantic cod. Member countries include the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Iceland.

1974 Cod was chosen as the official state fish.

1976 Through the Magnuson Act, the United States takes control of its Exclusive Economic Zone (waters 3-200 miles offshore), eliminating foreign fishing in these waters.

1977 The Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Groundfish sets minimum mesh sizes for nets, quotas for cod catch and closes areas to cod fishing.

1984 The “Hague” line establishes separate fishing zones for the United States and Canada in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank.

1986 Northeast Multi-Species Fishery Management Plan, which includes management of cod and 14 other fish species, sets minimum size for net mesh and retainable fish and implements seasonal closures.

2002 245 multi-species permits removed from the multi-species fishery, reducing pressure on cod populations.

2006 Further measures are implemented to reduce fishing mortality.

2007 Gulf of Maine spawning biomass estimates increase to above half of the target level.

2010 Catch limits and caps are set in an effort to end overfishing and continue rebuilding the New England groundfish populations.

2010 Gulf of Maine cod is declared not overfished.

2011 António Teixeira, President of the Academy of Codfish of New England, donates a model of the Sacred Cod to the Dighton Rock Maritime Museum.

Sources: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service, A History of the Cod in the Hall of the House of Representatives, 1895.

pendence. According to Adams, the Atlantic cod allowed Americans to participate in trade, and therefore prosper as a country. He wrote in his article that America traded dried cod for gold and silver with Catholic Europe, and with West India Islands for rum and molasses.

The committee also stated how images of cod appeared in several forms, including corporate seals, rich home decor, revenue stamps, and coins in 1776 and 1778.

"Is this emblem said to be too common and plain to accord with the painted splendors of this place?" the committee members asked the representatives. "It is no more common, simple and plain than the fathers who founded our state."

The committee won the Sacred Cod debate, and — with the exception of a "cod-napping" prank in 1933 by Harvard Lampoon staff — it has hung in the House chambers ever since.

Contemporary Cod

Massachusetts' kingly state fish continues to have a lasting impression on its constituents, despite overfishing scares over the last few decades.

Codfather's, a new restaurant in Taunton, buys their cod for fish and chips directly from Fall River and New Bedford fishermen.

"It's close, and it's fresh," said head chef and co-owner Dewey Desroisers. "It's nothing but fresh here."

Most exclusively, Desroisers said, he purchases his Atlantic cod from Dave's Fish Market in Fall River.

It is poor in iron, therefore preventing heart attacks," he said.

Cod, Commemorated

Da Silva said cod is so significant, first and foremost, because of its nutritional value. But cod's role in the growth and prosperity of Massachusetts over the centuries has led da Silva to commission for a second commemorative cod, modeled after the Sacred Cod hanging in the House of Representatives chambers.

This afternoon, the Academy of Codfish of New England will officially donate the second world-wide Sacred Cod to the Dighton Rock Maritime Museum.

"Think of the impact, the importance of cod to this country, why navigators came here," da Silva said.

"This beauty," he said of the hanging model, "this is really a codfish."

Dighton Rock Maritime Museum's Sacred Cod was carved by woodworker Jose Silva. Da Silva said the carving was modeled precisely after a \$52 Atlantic cod.

"I wanted to make it exact," da Silva said.

In addition to da Silva

James Leo Brennan

1997 ~ August 14th ~ 2011

You are not forgotten loved one
Nor will you ever be
As long as life and memory last
I will remember thee.

I miss you now,
My heart is sore
As time goes by
I miss you more.
Your loving smile,
Your gentle face,
No one can fill your vacant place.

*Sadly Missed
Shirley*

FAST FACTS

THE ACADEMY OF CODFISH OF NEW ENGLAND

- **Primary purpose:** "To promote the greater awareness among the public that codfish is one of the healthiest foods of New England"
- Incorporated in **July 2000** by Manuel Luciano da Silva
- Based out of **Bristol, R.I.**
- Have regular **cod suppers**

www.academyofcodfish.com

and the Dighton Rock Board of Directors, President Antonio Teixeira of the Academy of Codfish of New England will also attend the ceremony. Former Mayor of Fall River and new Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Recreation Edward Lambert will be the main speaker at the event.

Da Silva said the Sacred Cod carving will be the last artifact incorporated into the museum. With the Sacred Cod's commemoration, the Maritime Museum is now complete. With the

Maritime Museum's completion, Da Silva's run as Board of Directors President is complete as well.

"I have fulfillment, and I'm very emotional to give it away," da Silva said, as he fought back tears of passion. "But I give it away with pleasure, it brings me much happiness. Because codfish is a symbol of the whole area. There is no charity for this symbol anywhere. No Cod Street, no Cod Square. Now we have that symbol here and (the museum) is complete."

8th Year Anniversary

Todd F. Silvia

2003 - August 14 - 2011



When ties of love are broken
And loved ones have to part,
It leaves a wound that never heals,
In every aching heart.

Love,
Ed, Kelley, Brianna,
Colby & Katie Mae

8th Year Anniversary

Todd F. Silvia

2003 - August 14 - 2011



As long as dragonflies are here.
We know you're near.

Just close your eyes
And we will be there.
Love, Mom and Dad