

A River of Education

Hooked: Berkshires' charm lures back wandering fisherman

by Harry Desmond



Harry Desmond showing off the catch from a successful day on the Housatonic River. Photo courtesy of author.

Creating, owning and running a fly fishing business has been a fun and interesting journey.

I grew up in the Berkshires and lived here until I was 17. I knew I wanted to do something related to the outdoors, so I went to the University of Massachusetts to study park management. I lasted one semester and realized that college was not the path for me.

The following spring I packed my vehicle and moved west. My destination was Yellowstone National Park. I figured that I would give it a shot for a summer and see how it was to work there. I was going to clean rooms and live for the free time outdoors.

I must have been at the right place at the right time because within two months in the park I was managing the Old Faithful Lodge, at the park's most popular location. Needless to say it was an incredible summer! It was so incredible that I spent eight more years there as well as two additional years in various Rocky Mountain states.

In that first summer I picked up many hobbies: rock climbing, hiking, fishing, camping and mountain biking. I first picked up a fly rod as another activity to occupy my time while hanging out in the park. At first I had a strange relationship with the sport. I didn't necessarily like fly fishing, but I loved where it brought me,

standing in the middle of a river in areas untouched by man.

Over time my love for the sport grew, and the other hobbies took a backseat. In those 10 years I received an unconventional education, an education about man's relationship with the earth on a very intimate level, an education that can't be taught but only experienced.

I decided to move back to the Berkshires after a decade. Once home I still had the itch to travel. I made the decision to go to Guide School for fly fishing, in hopes of traveling to new and exciting places with the certification. I was still living in the Berkshires when I completed the schooling. I soon realized that I didn't see the Berkshires in the same way that I had when I was younger. I now saw a place with amazing culture, food, outdoorsy potential and most importantly a rich community with interesting and friendly people.

From there I was off and running. I came up with a business name and a goal. That was four years ago. I'm going into my fifth year of business and things are starting to really grow and blossom! When on the water with guests, my goal is to share that intimate relationship with the outdoors through fly fishing as well as having the guests leave the day-to-day behind and immerse themselves in a given ecosystem.

Thoreau couldn't have been any more right when he said "Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after." 🎣

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A perfect spring day would be to go fishing and come home with fresh-caught Berkshire trout, pair with new potatoes and spring asparagus and you're almost there.

ROASTED TROUT WITH NEW POTATOES AND ASPARAGUS

Yields 3-4 servings (depending how good the fisherperson)

- ½ pound new potatoes, washed of dirt
- 1 pound asparagus, tough ends removed, cut in half
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 whole dressed trout, heads removed
- ½ fresh lemon cut into circles
- 2 stems fresh or 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- Sea or kosher salt and fresh ground pepper

Preheat oven to 450°F

Cut potatoes in half; pieces should be similar in size. If very small, do not cut but make a small incision in each potato, with

a sharp knife.

Place potatoes in a glass bowl with a little water, cover with microwave-safe top and process

for 2 minutes, until barely tender. Or boil in saucepan with water, about 5 minutes, until barley tender.

Drain potatoes, wiping with paper towels.

Toss in a bowl with asparagus, 1 tablespoon olive oil and salt and pepper to taste.

Salt and pepper inside each prepared trout, insert lemon slices in each cavity.

Rub outside with remaining olive oil.

Cover a half sheet pan with parchment paper.

Arrange fish and vegetables on pan, keeping everything in a single layer.

Season all with salt and pepper to taste.

Tear or dust thyme over fish and vegetables.

Roast in center of oven for 15 minutes, toss vegetables, rotate pan and continue roasting until potatoes are brown and crispy.



Dinner, the sweet taste of success.

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