

ANGLERXTRAS

By: JOSH W. BROER

Catch - N - Keep



The joy of fresh seafood any day of the year

To most of us, the joy of fishing is finding the fish. You know, finding that non-stop bite on one of your "secret spots" and working a bent rod for a couple of hours straight. It's those banner days that, despite those days when you just can't find the bait or you just can't find the bite, keep you coming back to the water again and again and again. Or, it's the day that you catch your first 40 inch snook

that you just barely managed to wrestle out from between barnacle-covered dock pilings with only a hint of a leader left. Maybe it's the first time you experience the burn and the ache in the arms and back that comes with digging up a monster grouper or amberjack. Perhaps you have been lucky enough to have been engaged in an hour plus long sailfish, tuna, or marlin tug of war. And for you bass fishermen, you just

know in your heart that, one day, it will happen, you will catch that lunker 15 lb fish that you have hooked before but spit the worm or wrapped you around a cypress stump. Whatever your fishing goals are, whatever fresh or saltwater angling that brings to you that incredible joy that helps make life good and happy for you and your family, do it with passion - and don't ever stop.

Like most others, for me, it is the thrill of the fight that puts the biggest

smile on my face whether in the midst of battle or daydreaming at work. For example, I can't imagine anything more exciting than a big Tarpon take on the fly, and the desperate attempt to keep that fish from burning all the line and backing off your spool in a quick 30 seconds. However, there is another joy I get from fishing and it is a close second place these days. If you're a seafood lover, you will understand, fisherman or not.

For many years now I have been employing the use of a vacuum sealer to store my fish filets, (and sometimes hog, deer and turkey). The vacuum sealer, although not new to the market, is still somewhat of a novelty I've discovered as I periodically peek into friends' and families' freezers. More often than not, I still see the time-honored ziplock baggies filled with fish filets. While ziplocks do the trick for a few weeks or maybe even a month, leave your filets or meat in there for too long and you'll get burned every time.

With vacuum sealers, you use an electric sealing device and extra heavy-duty bags that vacuum out all the air, eliminating the possibility of the meat being exposed to freezer burn and bacteria intrusion. The result is an air and oxygen free seal that allows you to store your catch for as long as you need to... within reason. My brand of choice is the Food Saver®, which claims you can keep your sealed items fresh for over a year. While I never wait that long to cook up the catch, one thing's for sure, as long as your bag stays sealed, when you cut it open and prepare it for the fryer, oven, pan, grill or smoker, it's as fresh as the day you caught it.

You may not want to keep all

that fresh fish though. So, I've become somewhat addicted to surprising friends and family - can't forget my boss! - with vacuum sealed packages of fish I regularly catch and keep: mackerel, flounder, pompano, snook, redfish, trout, cobia, grouper, etc. If you've eaten pompano before, you know, it is arguably the best table fare in our Florida waters. For a rather small and narrow fish, the filets are firm and meaty, and one of the sweetest tasting fish in all of the oceans. Check out the price per pound the next time you're at the fish market! So, the idea of being able to share this "saltwater filet mignon" with those I love best is warming. That ice cold beer awaiting me in the fridge would be the perfect reward and compliment to the job at hand. Let's face it, we don't always enjoy cleaning fish after a long day on the water. However, knowing that you'll bring great big smiles to friend's faces later on makes it all worthwhile.

Either giving away vacuum sealed filets or making fresh seafood dinners for your spouse, friends and families, that is - getting into the hearts and souls and tummies of those dear to you creates a special feeling. There are of course lots of hunters and anglers out there who share their catch and kill with others. I imagine most of them either own or are aware of the value of a good vacuum sealer. If not, it's one of the best investments you can make for under \$100. Replacement bags or rolls are all you'll ever need to buy to keep that investment working for you. Most importantly, you'll never have freezer-burned fish again. And, if you don't know already, our universal joy of catching will soon become the joy of giving.

