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FINS Case Study

Spencer Gulf & West Coast

Prawn Fishermen's Association

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Project 96/384

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SUMMARY

The Spencer Gulf & West Coast Prawn Fishermen's Association took its first step on the "Quality Journey" to the development of formal Quality Assurance and greater market success in 1991.

On its own initiatives, and utilising only its own funds, it had the Queensland Department of Primary Industries staff run a Quality Assurance workshop at Port Lincoln in October 1992 with a 90% attendance by members.

This case study describes the Association's initiatives in:

- improving the management of the quality of its prawn products
- the branding and identification of its products
- and the development of its markets in New South Wales.

Quality management, product identification and market development were later nominated as three of the Fishing Industry National Strategy's (FINS) six "planks" for the development of the Australian seafood industry by the consultants Mojo-SCP in 1995.

The most noteworthy feature of this case study is that this Association was not only the first seafood industry group to take responsibility for its quality initiatives but it did so without seeking or waiting for a government grant to embark on its quality journey.

1. INTRODUCTION

This case study report documents the activities of the Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Fishermen's Association (SGWCPFA) in the field of quality management, product identification and market development-- three subjects which are included amongst the six "planks" in the Australian Seafood Industry Council's recently developed Fishing Industry National Strategy (Mojo 1995).

This report is based on information gathered by the writer from interviews with many persons (noted in Acknowledgments) and from research of various documents and reports.

The Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Fishermen's Association has long been a pro-active body, promoting the interests of its 39 members since 1980. It is no great surprise then that this Association which pioneered industry management committees introduced the concept of formal Quality Assurance (QA) to the fishing sector of the Australian seafood industry.

The Association has also been active in the field of product identification and market development in the last few years.

A remarkable feature of this story is that the Association introduced QA to its members using its own funds and long before government agencies and funds were available to assist in the development of formal quality management systems and related training.

A surprising element in the SGWCPFA start to QA was that the first decision was made in Canberra. In 1991 Ross Haldane then Secretary of the Association, and owner of the prawn trawler Boobook attended a Search Conference organised by the Department of Primary Industries and Energy Marketing Skills Program to bring the prawn fishing industries around Australia closer together on their export marketing.

Although the Conference did not make much progress on unifying the exporters, one of the speakers, Professor Ken Tucker of Queensland University, mentioned that successful marketing needed to be based on a consistently sound quality product.

Haldane knew that the quality of the prawns marketed by the Spencer Gulf fleet was variable and sometimes unsatisfactory. This meeting therefore triggered him to go back to the Association's board and propose that they start improving the quality of the prawns produced by their members and introducing QA as a first step in strengthening their markets and the returns on their prawn catch.

Mick Puglisi who retired as General Manager of the Association in June this year recalls that they called in the Queensland Department of Primary Industry once they agreed that:

" quality management needed to go hand in hand with fisheries management",

an area the Association had been deeply involved in for more than a decade since

Richard Stevens the then Director of Fisheries in South Australia (now Managing Director of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority) opened the way for industry involvement in fisheries management. Puglisi notes that the Board had to lead the members into taking an interest in quality management and acknowledges that :

“Ross (Haldane) led the charge on that one”

Thus the Association embarked on a de facto education and training program when it subsequently arranged for the Queensland Department of Primary Industry to conduct a workshop on Quality Assurance at Port Lincoln in October 1992 and for consultants Ruello & Associates to conduct a Marketing Workshop in Sydney and a Market Study Tour in Melbourne and Sydney in December 1992.

The participants on this tour gained first hand information on the needs of the seafood trade and consumers and subsequently helped the Association move away from its traditional focus on production volume and become more market oriented. The outcome has been a remarkable change in the handling, refrigeration and marketing of the catch over the past five years.

The fleet now consists almost entirely of freezer vessels which unload consistently good quality prawns, the Association has agreed to a cessation of the practice of dyeing (artificially colouring) cooked prawns, consumer awareness of the South Australian prawn has been raised through a market promotion exercise in Sydney and the Association is a participant in a national program on QA in the prawn industry.

A commendable list of achievements for an Association of strong individuals, gained after an “investment” (expenditure) of about \$40, 000 and many many hours of vigorous debate for the betterment of their industry.

The only outside funding for these initiatives has been a contribution of \$10,000 from the Eyre Regional Development Board in 1995. This is noteworthy because it was a case of industry taking responsibility for its own quality initiatives and not waiting for a Government grant to embark on its ‘quality journey’.

2. THE SPENCER GULF PRAWN FISHERY 1991

In 1991 about 75 percent of the fleet consisted of "wet boats" refrigerating their catch in brine tanks while the others were "freezer vessels" preserving their catch by means of plate, blast or brine freezing equipment.

Fishing trips could last as much as five days, prawns were size graded by hand and eye, cooked on board and held in brine tanks, often in bumpy seas and were not in good condition by the time they arrived at fish factories or distant fish markets a day after unloading. Wet prawns unloaded after only a night at sea were usually of very good quality but overnight trips are uncommon.

Cooking at sea is not an easy task when catches are high and seas inclement and consequently there was considerable variation in how well prawns were cooked hence batches of inadequately cooked prawns were not unusual in times of large catches. Similar variability and problems were encountered in the dipping of green (uncooked) prawns in a solution of sodium metabisulphite to control the development of melanosis("black spot").

The catch of "brine prawns" unloaded at the end of a fishing trip of several days consisted of product of variable age and quality; the prawns packed into cartons by South Australian processors could be anything from one to four days old, and on arrival in Sydney or Melbourne were sometimes smelly and many had heads loose.

The common practice of storing and unloading wet prawns in net bags holding up to 100 kilos is not conducive to the delivery of prime seafood to customers. In the warmer months the bags of prawns have laid on the deck for up to an hour exposed to the heat of the sun before they are swung up to the road transport along the jetty with the trawler's lifting gear.

The pressure on the prawns in the bottom of the net bags is high when the bag is lifted and it becomes dangerously so when the bag hits the jetty or the side of the truck during unloading operations

It was not unusual therefore to have brine prawns arrive in poor condition at the capital city destination and with a short and unpredictable shelf life. Consequently the wet prawns usually fetched the fishermen about \$2-3 per kilo less than the equivalent size frozen at sea (FAS) product.

The prawns from freezer vessels were widely considered to be of a more consistently higher quality than those of the wet boats.

The majority of the catch was processed or handled by local companies at Port Lincoln, Whyalla or in Adelaide and some would be onsold to wholesalers in Melbourne and Sydney.

Considerable employment was generated at Port Lincoln when brine vessels unloaded wet prawns to the Australian Bight Fishermen Pty Ltd which size graded, packed and froze whole prawns (and processed prawn products) for Australian and overseas buyers.

A minority of trawler owners, principally freezer vessel operators sold their own catch and arranged road transport of fresh or frozen product to buyers in Sydney and Melbourne.

Most of the Spencer Gulf catch is sold as fresh cooked prawns in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney prior to Christmas to capitalise on the strong demand for cooked prawns in the lead up to the holiday season while the majority of the post Christmas catch (March -July season) is frozen green (uncooked) for export and domestic sales.

3. THE SPENCER GULF FLEET OCTOBER 1996

Today the situation is noticeably different from that five years earlier. Only ten percent of the fleet operates as wet boats, fishermen recognise the market benefits that come from a consistently high quality FAS product and the change over to freezer vessels is still continuing despite a cost of about \$150000 for the conversion.

The quality of the size grading, cooking, and treatment with metabisulphite is widely acknowledged by all sectors as having improved noticeably in the past five years.

In short, most fishermen, processors and fish merchants now agree that the benefits of FAS product, listed below, outweigh the costs to the industry:

- Date marked and known age
- More uniform quality ie freshness, flavour and shelf life
- Better grading as a result of packing to international size grades
- Avoidance of double handling and refreezing
- Better image for the South Australian prawn

Approximately 50% of the Spencer Gulf catch is now exported, primarily to Japan. The remainder is sold on the domestic market. More and more fishermen are actively involved in selling their product direct from the vessel. Several vessels are now licensed as export premises but this increased processing at sea has been at the expense of local employment on shore.

This change in the fleet's processing and marketing capabilities has therefore not been welcomed by all processors or fish merchants.

These changes were achieved mainly because of Association's initiatives and perseverance and some help from A. Raptis & Sons' staff as noted below.

4. QUALITY INITIATIVES

Quality Assurance

After returning from the DPIE Search Conference in Canberra Ross Haldane convinced the Committee that there was a need to improve the overall quality of the prawn products as a prerequisite to better marketing and that this meant education and training in quality management and quality assurance.

The Association commissioned the International Food Institute of the Queensland Department of Primary Industry (IFIQ) [now known as Centre for Food Technology] to conduct a two day workshop on Quality Assurance.

This workshop was conducted by IFIQ's Deon Mahoney and David Milne in October 1992 with the objective of introducing "...the concept of quality assurance to secure the quality of prawn landed and processed in Port Lincoln". (Mahoney, 1992).

The workshop, attended by crew from 28 vessels (approximately three quarters of the fleet) was well received and served to introduce the participants to:

1. the concept of quality assurance
2. product specifications
3. formal quality management systems
4. HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) concept

This workshop was fully funded by the Association from its Product Development budget for the year.

In December that year some Association members followed up this training with a Marketing Workshop in Sydney and a Market Study Tour in Melbourne and Sydney.(see 5. Marketing Initiatives, below, page 11).

In October 1994 the Association commissioned consultants Ruello & Associates to conduct a workshop on Prawn Quality Assurance and to develop a guidebook on Prawn QA for its members.

Principal consultant Nick Ruello visited the Spencer Gulf area and spent time at sea on two trawlers in November to monitor fishing, processing and unloading practices. He also arranged for the distribution of a questionnaire to prospective participants at a February 1995 workshop in order to better assess current handling practices and equipment and previous training.

This questionnaire revealed that:

- many vessel operators had a poor knowledge of the requirements for cooking prawns for commercial distribution
- there was a lot of uncertainty about the safe use of sodium metabisulphite.

A two day workshop was conducted by N. Ruello and A. Fordham in February 1995 with the following explicit objectives:

- 1 Review handling and processing procedures to identify critical control points and potential hazards and any corrective action that can be taken to improve the quality of the prawns marketed.
- 2 Discuss the various approaches to quality management so that members can differentiate between Quality Control , QA and Total Quality Management
- 3 Demonstrate the steps in preparation of a process flow chart and hazards table as part of a formal QA program and manual.

This workshop was intentionally not heavily promoted to Association members in order to attract only those that had a serious interest in quality management. The crew of 15 trawlers attended this workshop with 11 of these having attended the QA workshop two years earlier.

One of the highlights of the workshop for participants and consultants was the lively and instructive debate over the:

- “best way” and optimal boiling time to cook prawns and
- the length of time required for successful dipping with metabisulphite.

The exercises at the workshop demonstrated that majority of fishermen tended to undercook prawns for successful mass distribution and overdip the green prawns (too much time or too strong a solution). Another outcome was a recognition of the need for greater attention to the salt content of prawns held in brine tanks for a few days.

In short the workshop achieved its stated objectives and produced excellent outcomes in relation to improving cooking and dipping procedures but the implicit objective of stimulating operators to develop their own formal quality management system was only partly attained.

A guidebook, including a model QA program and manual, to assist operators document their own QA program was prepared. The model QA manual was a HACCP based program with 13 of the 18 elements (“chapters”) required for the International Standards Organisation ISO 9002 quality management standard.

This QA system was intentionally developed as a simple one which would meet the HACCP requirements for AQIS’s Food Processing Accreditation (FPA) and modelled on the ISO standard in order to facilitate an “upgrade” when the operator wanted to seek ISO certification.

Several vessels seeking to get FPA registration found the workshop exercises on the development of HACCP flow charts and hazards table very useful and subsequently reported that they have been able to develop “good” hazards table and flow charts for their vessel that are far superior to those commonly seen earlier in FPA manuals.

Unfortunately with the change of state government in 1995 came a change in the reimbursements of funds from licence fees to industry associations and a decline in the SGWCPFA funds. This was perceived by some members as a weakening of state government support for the QA program, and somewhat puzzling in view of the Primary Industry Department's publicly espoused policy on supporting QA in primary industries.

However more vessels are likely to seek certification of some type as part of the national QA program on prawn trawlers (See section 7. The future).

5. MARKETING INITIATIVES

The SGWCPFA has had an active interest in marketing issues for almost a decade and commissioned consultants Ruello & Associates to conduct a three day training program and educational tour of the Sydney and Melbourne fish markets for its members in December 1992.

The ten participants were given training sessions on marketing and promotion and presentations on Australian and international prawn markets. One of the most useful parts of the program was the presentation by a restaurateur, the NSW Fish Marketing Authority, fish merchants and a major supermarket seafood buyer on what they wanted in the way of prawn products and service.

Equally informative was the opportunity for first hand research on competitive food products and consumers perceptions during a visit to a shopping centre in Melbourne and Sydney.

Other notable outcomes of this program were:

- An understanding of the need for marketing versus selling and a customer focus rather than the traditional production focus
- An appreciation of the benefits of South Australian product identification and company branding on cartons.

The workshop also identified three critical areas for resolution:

- Prawns from the wet boats were of a variable, sometimes poor quality while those frozen at sea were consistently better
- the pale colour of western king prawns was a marketing problem, particularly in NSW, mainly because trade buyers and consumers were unaware that the western king was a paler species than the eastern king
- the use of food colouring to artificially colour cooked prawns was illegal outside of South Australia

The quality issue has already been discussed above.

The second finding alerted the Association to a need to identify, differentiate and promote the western king prawn from South Australia in order to develop and strengthen their markets. In the next year (1993) the Association commissioned TCG Export to prepare a strategic plan for the development of brand identification of the western king prawn.

The proposed plan called for a coordinated marketing effort based on the development and promotion of a registered brand and logo managed by the Association. This proposal did not receive sufficient support for it to be acted upon, because of the reasons outlined below.

Many fishermen have long standing selling arrangements with local or distant buyers and were reasonably happy with these existing arrangements and returns while some did not believe that the Association should get too involved in marketing anyway. There would also need to be a substantial "up front investment" of time and money in setting up the necessary arrangements and packaging materials.

A number of members with good personal and business relationships with their buyers feel that any coordinated marketing would be at the expense of their traditional buyers or distributors. For the members who also have family or financial links with the Australian Bight Fishermen's Pty Ltd this was a particularly difficult issue to decide on.

The Association did agree to continue with some promotional work and the question of promotion and maintaining existing marketing channel relationship is discussed further below (after discussion on problems with dyeing of prawns).

Dyeing of Prawns

A unique feature of the Spencer Gulf fleet has been the practice of dyeing the cooked prawns with Tetrazine or Ponceau 4 R (Food colouring 102 and 124 respectively) in order to give them a stronger red colour and improve their visual appeal.

This practice originated in the 1970's apparently at the urging of Melbourne buyers who faced some market resistance and difficulties selling the fresh cooked South Australian prawns in competition with the cooked eastern king prawn from Queensland which has a naturally stronger red colour.

This colouring of prawns with food colouring has been prohibited by food regulations in all states except South Australia. Furthermore, as the fishermen learned at the Marketing Workshop in 1992, the greatest threat to the seafood industry is the consumer backlash and unfriendly media attention if a child were to have an unexpected allergic or other physiological reaction to the food colouring.

(Although the use of a particular dye is indicated on some 10 kg or random weight cartons of prawns, when the prawns are sold loose in a retail establishment or restaurant there is no warning that the prawns have been treated with a chemical).

The Association Board agreed that members should discontinue dyeing of prawns in the light of consumer concerns about food additives and the potential for legal penalties under civil and statutory law.

Almost all South Australian fishermen have apparently stopped using food colouring but there is anecdotal evidence that the practice has not been completely eliminated and that several processors in South Australia and Melbourne regularly dye prawns for the Melbourne market.

6. PROMOTION AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Adelaide

In the spring of 1993 and 1994 the SGWCPFA arranged to promote their products and stimulate demand by holding a public auction of a bag of new season prawns at the Adelaide (SAFCOL) fish market and donate the proceeds to charity. In 1993 the "auctioneer" was Graham Cornes the coach of the Adelaide Crows football team.

In November 1994 Steven Baker the Deputy Premier was persuaded to be auctioneer and he sold a 50 kg net bag of fresh cooked prawns for \$3100 to Tom Angelakis, market buyer for the well known Adelaide fish merchants Angelakis Bros. This money was donated to the Farm Hand Appeal and the auction was covered on the evening Current Affairs program by Channel 9 and local newspapers.

These events generated positive publicity for the new prawn season and the Spencer Gulf Prawns of a value far in excess of the costs of the exercises hence they were widely regarded as a most profitable event.

Sydney

Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd (the company managing the Sydney Fish Market, of the former Fish Marketing Authority) in its quest for more seafood for its auctions gave the SGWCPFA a generous offer in August 1995 to sell and promote the western king prawns from Spencer Gulf.

SFM's offer of a promotional program, with a direct cost of approximately \$15000, to raise the popularity and price of the Spencer Gulf prawns in Sydney was accepted at the Association's General Meeting in October, after considerable support and debate, but ultimately utilised by four trawlers only.

The program developed by Mary Longfoot SFM's Promotions Manager consisted of:

- Launch to food media and restaurateurs in November
- Press release and samples to food media
- Bar B Q for market buyers
- Distribution of recipe cards and information sheets

The use of high profile chef Tony Bilson to develop "special recipes" and launch the program helped to draw many food media people and restaurateurs along and make the media launch a great success. At the SFM BBQ for market buyers consultant Nick Ruello gave the buyers a short account of the Association's efforts in improving quality and the biological reasons for the paler colour of the western kings.

The prawns were well received by the media and trade buyers at their respective functions. The events were covered by the print and electronic media and resulted in coverage by the two Sydney papers, several radio interviews and items in food and trade magazines.

Some of the media coverage, press release, information notes and recipes are appended.

When three pallets of Spencer Gulf prawns made their 1995 debut on the auction floor on Monday 27 November prices offered were above the reserve price set by the four supplying vessels for the small size grades and met the reserve on the larger prawns.

The auction prices were however mostly at a price level lower than those of Sydney wholesalers trying to selling Spencer Gulf prawns (from South Australian processors) to Sydney market buyers ie retailers and restaurateurs.

Thus the direct sale of prawns from South Australian trawler to Sydney retailers and restaurateurs via auction disrupted the traditional marketing channels of South Australian processors and Sydney wholesalers with a somewhat predictable outcry from the established Spencer Gulf prawn wholesalers in Sydney and South Australia.

These "trade complaints" coupled with a declining interest in the South Australian prawns and weak sales after Christmas led to a gradual cessation of this promotion and marketing exercise such that no further consignment were sent in the new season in 1996.

In aggregate some six tonnes of prawns were sold by auction in the Sydney market. Nevertheless, the exercise did achieve its objective of raising the profile and market awareness of the western king prawn in Sydney and elsewhere in NSW at no extra cost to consignors and at almost no cost to the other major beneficiaries: the SGWCPFA.

There is no doubt that many consumers and media commentators in Sydney now know that the western king prawn has a paler colour than its east coast relative and the only notable loss in this exercise was a little business foregone by companies who would otherwise have processed or sold the prawns sold at auction.

SFM was happy with the outcome and looks forward to selling more prawns from Spencers Gulf. Two fishermen were sufficiently pleased with the results to want to utilise the Sydney Fish Market again the next spring.

7. THE FUTURE

Evolution continues. The Spencer Gulf fleet is continuing with its mechanisation and quality improvement. Crab screens are being fitted to the sorting trays on many vessels to separate crabs from the prawns on deck and reduce the damage that the plentiful blue swimmer crabs and their claws inflict on prawns.

Andrew Haldane a local fisherman is now producing and marketing a compact prawn grading machine that has led to further mechanisation and more consistent size grading on board. The orders for these machines are so strong and widespread that Haldane may cease fishing.

The Association's current board is committed to the development and adoption of the Code of Practice for on board prawn handling and quality management that is currently being developed by the Australian Prawn Promotion Association (APPA), with Department of Industry, Science and Technology funding.

This Code of Practice includes the cooking procedures and hazards table developed at the Port Lincoln QA workshop in 1995 (and documented in the model QA manual).

A Raptis & Sons' prawn processing plant in Adelaide has recently gained ISO 9002 certification and this will stimulate and add further pressure on the Spencer Gulf fleet to implement a formal (documented) quality management system.

Formal QA is now here to stay. As Colin Freeman, General Manager of Australian Bight Fishermen Pty Ltd, puts it :

"... it probably won't make a difference in Japan but it will be useful if you are after new customers in Europe. It probably would make a difference if you are not in it. But we can't force fishermen into QA, they would only sell elsewhere"

The APPA has had its Annual Operational Plan endorsed at its Annual General Meeting and the Spencer Gulf fishermen and their two South Australian representatives (on the APPA board) await further promotion of Australian prawns in overseas markets.

On the domestic market the Association has no formal plans or budget for promotion in the 1996/7 financial year but several fishermen wish to continue promoting the South Australian prawns, probably by selling some prawns via the Sydney Fish Market auction.

As one Port Lincoln fisherman comments:

"We need to continue to promote our prawns (in Sydney) even if we don't get more money for them"

8. CONCLUSIONS

Critical Success Factors

Several factors that contributed to the innovation and success of the SGWCPFA in their endeavours in improving quality management, product identification and market development can be identified:

1. An environment conducive to change. Australian fishermen's interest in marketing and other issues waxes and wanes according to prevailing economic conditions. Falling prawn prices in the early 1990's and growing competition in Sydney and elsewhere from fresh farmed prawns made Spencer Gulf fishermen amenable to new ideas re handling and marketing.
2. There were champions for change and visionary leaders on the Board to drive Association initiatives: Ross Haldane and Mick Puglisi, respectively Secretary and President of the SG WCPFA. They were instrumental in arranging for a specially designed marketing education and markets tour in 1992, which was a turning point for younger members in particular.
3. Committee members who participated in the 1992 Marketing Workshop then assisted in spreading the message about the fundamental role of quality and the need for promotion for long term market success.
4. The presence of Mick Puglisi on the Association's management team as President/ Executive Officer/Chairman from 1979 to June 1996 provided stability and "continuity" to the Association board.
5. The support from the Adelaide processors and other distant buyers for a change in refrigeration and prawn preservation practices. A Raptis & Sons, for example, made staff available to assist some of their suppliers improve on board processing and freezing.

Costs and Benefits. The Pleasure and Pain

Change does not come without costs. The increase in at sea processing and packing over the last decade has led to a loss of employment ashore. The more direct and active approach to marketing by some operators in spring of 1995 led to considerable debate and some heartburn in the industry and a very small loss of business by traditional processors and wholesalers of the Spencer Gulf prawns.

Industry politics and parochialism seem inevitable and they have impacted on the interpersonal relationships of various participants in the Spencer Gulf prawn industry too. Fortunately this pain is only temporary and the displeasure is fading away.

The major industry beneficiaries of the changes to handling and marketing practices have been the fishermen of South Australia but king prawn fishermen in north and western Australia are hidden beneficiaries of the Sydney promotion of western king prawns in 1995. These fishermen also owe a debt of gratitude to the Sydney Fish Market for this promotion.

Prawn consumers in Australia and overseas are also hidden beneficiaries of the SGWCPFA's activities in quality management, product identification and market development and will continue to benefit from ongoing QA activities.

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10. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Victoria

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and Tim Siderellis

TONY BILSON'S

Western King Prawn Barbie Recipes

Steamed Prawns

Salt water court bouillon

For 2 kg prawns:

4 litres water

300 ml white wine

80 g Maldon sea salt

1 onion, chopped

1 Tbsp chopped, fresh thyme

1 bay leaf

12 peppercorns

Bring mixture to the rolling boil, cook the prawns by lowering them into the court bouillon contained in a conical sieve. Cook in 500 g lots for 3-4 minutes until prawns have attained good colour and texture. This depends on the court bouillon recipe, the heat and the size of the prawns. The important thing to remember is not to overcook them. Exercise care of caution.

Barbecued Prawns

Marinate 2 kg raw prawns in the following:

3 cloves of garlic, crushed

1 tsp crushed ginger

3 chopped golden shallots

1 Tbsp chopped fresh thyme

1 tsp salt

1 tsp ground pepper

good pinch cayenne pepper

100 ml good quality olive oil

Cook the marinated prawns until shells have crisped and prawns are cooked (approx. 3-5 minutes depending on size).

Accompaniments

AIOLI

2 egg yolks

1 Tbsp water

1 Tbsp lemon juice

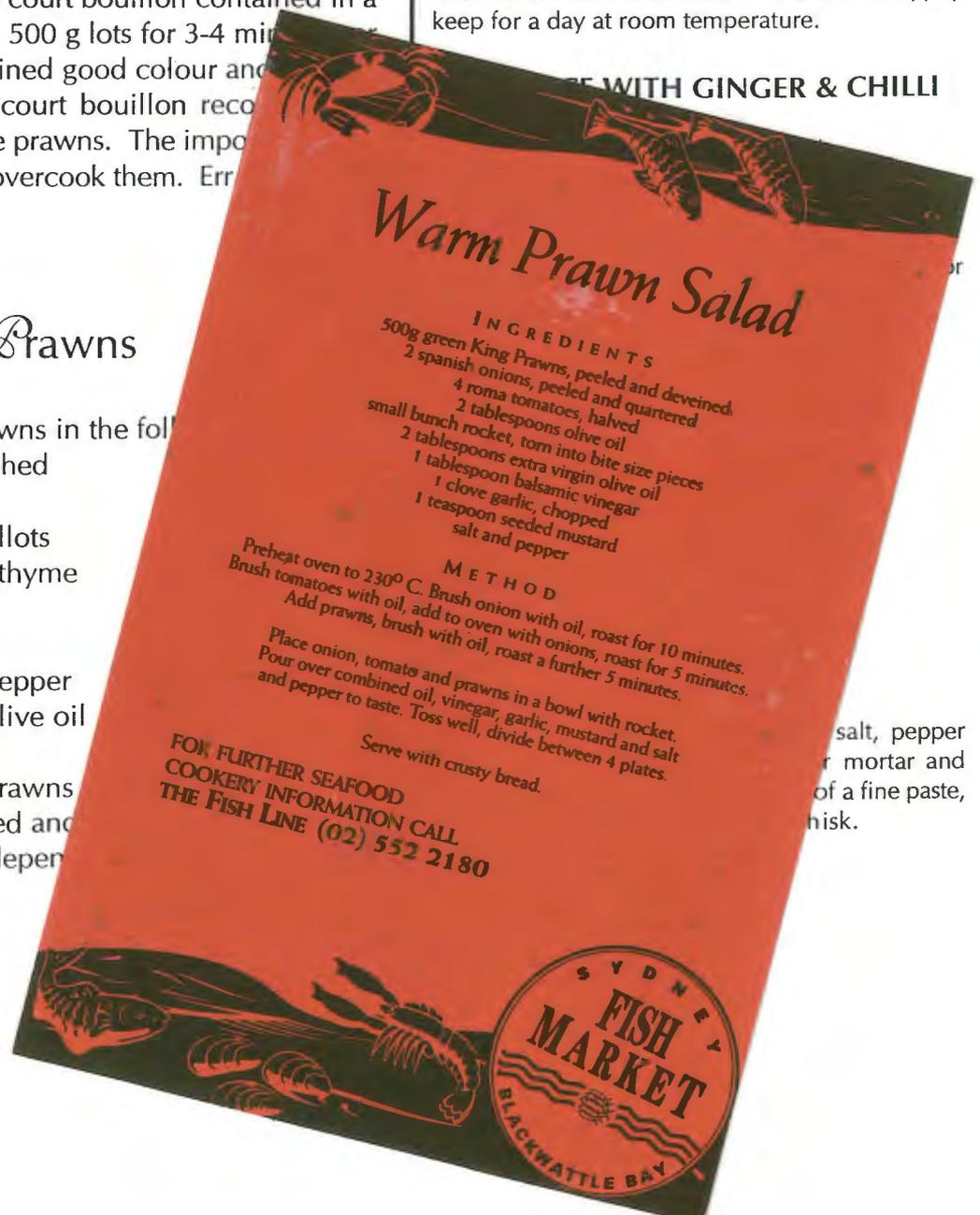
3 cloves garlic, crushed & pureed

1/2 tsp salt

1 cup (250 ml) good quality olive oil

Mix together with a whisk the yolks, garlic, salt, lemon juice and water. Add the oil drop by drop, increasing the amount as it assimilates. If the aioli breaks it can be reconstituted by whisking the broken mix into a fresh egg yolk and water mix. The aioli can be made in advance and will happily keep for a day at room temperature.

WITH GINGER & CHILLI



Checkout



Royal command performance . . . Western king prawns debuted at the Sydney Fish Market last week Picture: BOB BARKER

Western kings ideal for right time of year feast

Sydney M-Herald

Tuesday, December 5, 1995

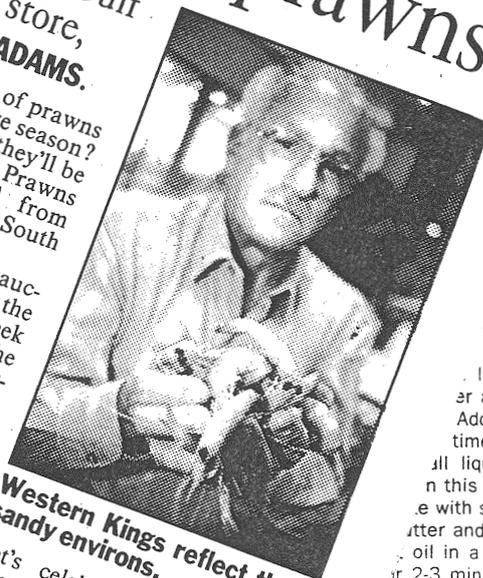
Christmas prawns

A new Spencer Gulf treat is in store, writes JANE ADAMS.

THINKING of prawns for the festive season? Chances are they'll be Western King Prawns (*penaeus laticuicatus*) from the Spencer Gulf in South Australia.

These crustaceans were auctioned for the first time at the Sydney Fish Market last week and the debut pleased the Spencer Gulf Prawn Fishermen's Association general manager, Mick Puglisi. "East coast prawns have always been favoured, perhaps because Spencer Gulf prawns are paler," he says. This colour variation is caused by their grey sandy "desert-like" sedimentary environs.

The Day One inaugural lot - a mere 450 kilograms to test response - fetched \$18-\$20/kg wholesale, according to size. The Spencer Gulf fishermen established Australia's first prawn management authority and practise eco-friendly prawn



Western Kings reflect their sandy environs. Photo by LEAR

AS Christmas approaches, prawn prices becomes a subject discussed almost as frequently as the weather.

Few serious seafood fanciers would let the Festive season pass without enjoying fresh, fabulous prawns.

Retailers predict we'll have oceans of quality prawns available from now until Christmas at prices to suit every pocket.

Widespread rainfall across NSW, good catches in South Australia and a lack of interest on the part of Japanese buyers means all the more prawns for us!

Whether buying your prawns cooked green, look for prawns with a firm but moist flesh; the shell should be tight and intact with no sign of discoloration; there should be a pleasant ocean smell.

Store prawns, cooked or green, in the fridge or freezer in their shell; they retain the flavour and moisture.

One of the many prize prawns to be seeing more of is the Western King prawn from South Australia.

Western kings made their debut at the Sydney Fish Market (Until now only a small number of retailers have traded in the prawns).

The following prawn recipe is specially designed for the prawn but naturally, any other prawn can be substituted.

TONY BILSON'S BARBIE KING PRAWNS WITH

Serves 4-6 as a main course or as an entree

Ingredients: 1kg green prawns in their shells; 10 bay leaves

Marinade: 1 cup (60ml) lemon juice; 1/2 tsp salt; 1 tsp cayenne pepper; fresh parsley; 1

available in suburban areas should be sold. Selling for cool prawns

tomato; 1 tbsp arley; 1 tbsp

large saucepan. Bring to a low heat until the oil is hot. Add rice, stir well. Add tomatoes, capers, pepper to taste and stir to combine. Spoon risotto into bowls. Prawn mixture