

The Well Cooked Journalist: A traditional Joey Skaggs recipe

“Is it not an art to deceive a trout with an artificial fly?” Walton

This delicious recipe for catching and cooking a journalist has been thoroughly tested. It features easy to find ingredients.

This is a very satisfying meal and although I have prepared it many times, one should not be concerned about repeating it too often. There are many ways to change the recipe and the results will always be pleasing.

There’s no need to worry about affecting the population of journalists. This is not an endangered species. It’s open season, no limit.

Although they can act like sharks or barracuda, they have also been compared to piranha. They are extremely territorial and defensive and will repeatedly attack either singularly or in large groups. You can usually find them behind hidden agendas, as they tend to conceal their politics and beliefs. However, they can be biased, opinionated, prejudiced, cynical, and even racist. At times, they take fact and contrive it so it bares little resemblance to reality.

But the media angler must not discriminate against them. Whoever bites and swallows the hook, is to be cooked. This includes pontificating corporate groupers as well as counter culture large mouth minnows. Even bottom feeders, like tabloid hacks and gossip mongers, are cookable.

As is true of rice or pasta, cooking times and taste vary based on the judgement, experience, competence, and sophistication of the chef.

ANGLING FOR THE JOURNALIST

Concoct a well thought-out story. TV news producers, writers and reporters are greatly under the influence of Hollywood. Hollywood is equally influenced by what appears in the news. Our culture is reflected in both of these forms of media. So it’s important to combine the necessary theatrical elements to attract them. In essence, give them what they want!

Dangling the line:

You may select from any of the following hooks, lures, and tasty baits. Mix and match for a formula that is sure to work.

Dependable hooks:

- Sex
- Controversy
- Power
- Sensationalism
- Exploitation
- Heroism
- New technologies
- Betrayal
- Revenge
- Incompetence
- Faith
- Little guy against the system
- Wealth
- Determination
- Anything with an animal or a child

Choose the bait:

- Religion
- Finance
- Politics
- Popular Culture
- Corporate exploitation
- Social injustice
- Emerging industries
- Arts
- Weather
- Sports

Reeling them in:

The media angler must be well prepared. Following is a list of critical ingredients and needed tools and utensils that must be in place to assure a successful meal.

Ingredients:

- Conviction and purpose
- Well conceived concept
- Element of probability
- Irony
- Humor
- Satire
- Wit
- Deception
- Universal or special appeal
- Compelling press release
- Good visuals for the media to focus on
- More than one source for verification
- Great follow-up
- Well orchestrated exposé
- Patience
- Confidentiality

Tools and utensils:

- Funding
- Location(s)
- Props
- Actors
- Telephone
- Fax Machine
- Answering machine
- Internet access
- Internet presence
- Camera & video gear
- Letterhead
- Business cards
- Tape recorder
- Clipping service

Caution:

This is a warning to all would-be media anglers. Care must be taken not to yank on the line before your catch has sufficiently bitten the hook. Nibbles frequently occur before swallowing the bait. Tease them until they gotta have it. One must always be patient. Once the hook is set, they usually jump in the boat. And believe it or not, many others simply follow suit. Often feeding frenzies occur and you might even catch more than you can handle.

But once caught they tend to be humorless and self righteous. They puff up and should be iced quickly. Or they will lie, slander, trivialize, and dismiss the angler so as to shift blame and not look ridiculous or stupid.

Although most look very attractive on the surface, they are unappetizing uncooked and will most likely leave a bad taste in one's mouth if served raw. They actually resemble lawyers in this respect. But that's another recipe.

Many claim serving them raw is preferred. Journalists are very easy prey for an intelligent, thinking person to eviscerate. They usually contain few guts, and the head and backbone are easily removed. I do, however, believe more pleasure is derived from, and a most pleasant feeling is obtained, by thoroughly cooking them before devouring them.

COOKING THE CATCH

Personal note to the chef:

Be sure you have no doubts about what you are doing and why. Cook for artistic satisfaction, not for profit. And never use ingredients that are illegal.

Recipe:

Take one arrogant, narcissistic, pretentious journalist. You may boil, broil, deep-fat fry, steam, bake, roast, grill or poach.

Precaution:

You can skin it or not. Just remember they usually have very thin skin which reddens quickly. Watch out for sharp teeth and a forked tongue. Do not use a pressure cooker. This could blow up in your face.

Combine the following:

- A somewhat plausible or even far-fetched story that you can stage somehow.
- Toss in obvious clues.
- Stir in controversy.
- Thoroughly mash in probability.
- Sprinkle on timeliness.
- Spoon in some sex appeal.
- Baste frequently with guile.
- Add a tablespoon of sleaze.
- Add a half teaspoon of suspicion.
- Whip in a pound of charm and a half cup of hype.
- Toss in an occasional sound bite.
- Mix with expert testimonials and co-conspirators as needed.
- Gradually add visuals, best if you use attractive or outrageous looking people. Supporting costumes, hats, or t-shirts can add flavor.
- For tough journalists, add in more fact with fiction.
- Garnish with cunning.
- Add interviews. Repeat as many times as necessary.
- Cover and let steam in its own juices.
- Cook until the plot thickens and it all gels.
- Journalist may continue to cook from its own internal heat even when the fire is out.
- Do not overcook or give away too many clues as it will make the meal smell a little too fishy.
- For best results, document the entire procedure so you can share the results with others.

Once cooked, serve with a straight face on a bed of the catch's own making. Sit back and enjoy. If done right, this dish should taste just like chicken.

Disclaimer:

Joey Skaggs is not responsible for any gastric disorder this dish may cause. It's amazing what journalists will say once they've been cooked. They immediately start crying "foul play! I was had, and so were you, audience. This bad man targeted the wrong journalist. I'm actually the good guy. How sad for us all." Or they get their colleagues to snap at you for them. Or they'll make up their own stories and say they knew all along that it was a bated hook but went along just to see what would happen.

They will tell lies and try to make you look like the liar. They will associate you with crooks and con-men. They will tell you how this hurts because they will have to work harder to verify the facts as they can no longer trust any one. And they will wish you both legal and bodily harm.

End note:

One would think that one would grow tired of the sport because it no longer looks sporting. More like fishing out of barrel. But each catch is a new adventure and makes a great story. I personally have many trophy fish in my den. And, like all fishermen, I prefer exhibiting the big ones, but I'm proud of everyone that I've caught.

I'm just hoping that some day my tales will be more about the one that got away. That mythological, uncompromising, ethical, incorruptible journalist. An unbiased advocate that employs responsible journalistic practices. But for now, I'm going fishing.

By Joey Skaggs