

Lobster pound will sedate crustaceans with marijuana before cooking

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SOUTHWEST HARBOR — A lobster named Roscoe was the first to experience a technique lobster pound owner Charlotte Gill is hoping will be more humane way of executing lobsters.

In an experiment to test the affect of cannabis on lobsters, Roscoe the lobster was placed for a few minutes in a covered box with about two inches of water at the bottom. Marijuana smoke was then blown into the water at the bottom of the box.

Gill's hypothesis is that the treatment sedates the animals and could make their deaths less traumatic.



"I feel bad that when lobsters come here there is no exit strategy," said Gill, who has owned Charlotte's Legendary Lobster Pound for seven years. "It's a unique place and you get to do such unique things but at the expense of this little creature. I've really been trying to figure out how to make it better."

Following the experiment, Roscoe's claw bands were removed and kept off for nearly three weeks.

His mood seemed to have an impact on the other lobsters in the tank. He never again wielded his claws as weapons. Earlier this week, Roscoe was returned to the ocean as a thank you for being the experimental crustacean.

"The reason for keeping it so long, I wanted to make sure there were no adverse affects," said Gill about how Roscoe remained a calm force until his release. "That one time has had significant long-term effects."

Earlier this year, Switzerland decided to ban boiling of live lobsters, citing studies that suggest the animals feel pain. New Zealand instituted the same ban in 1999 and a small village in Italy has also banned the practice.

A long-time animal rights supporter who has two pet goats on the premises, Gill wants to feel good about what she is serving. But she somehow has to offer lobster for customers to eat, or else she would have to change the name and focus of her business.

In Switzerland, the recommended method of cooking the crustacean is to electrocute it or stab it in the head before putting it in the boiling water.

“These are both horrible options,” said Gill. “If we’re going to take a life we have a responsibility to do it as humanely as possible.”

Throughout the 2018 season, Gill has been doing business as usual by boiling or steaming lobsters while still alive. She has recently set up separate station at the restaurant where lobsters can be sedated with cannabis before being steamed to eat, at the customer’s request.

Next season, Gill hopes all lobsters will be sedated before being steamed. Customers will still be able to have their lobster cooked more traditionally, but Gill is said she is confident that the method does not infuse the lobster meat with THC.

“For this new process though, in order to alleviate any and all concern about residual effect, as we will be dealing with the chemical compound THC, we will use a different method,” said Gill in an email. “THC breaks down completely by 392 degrees, therefore we will use both steam as well as a heat process that will expose the meat to 420 degree extended temperature, in order to ensure there is no possibility of carryover effect (even though the likelihood of such would be literally impossible).”

Gill’s employees have aided in her research and developing the practices the business will use. A larger tank will be used to hold multiple lobsters while an air mattress pump will infuse the water within the tank with marijuana smoke. Once the lobsters are sedated, they will be steamed and picked.

Gill holds a medical marijuana caregiver license with the state and is using product she grows in order to guarantee its quality. She also recently acquired her picker license with the state, which allows her to pick and sell her cooked lobster meat.

“I’m not selling an edible,” said Gill. She argues that a happier animal produces a better tasting meat.

“The difference it makes within the meat itself is unbelievable,” she said. “Everything you put into your body is energy.”

“The animal is already going to be killed,” said Gill. “It is far more humane to make it a kinder passage.”

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