

Tuna Haulin'



James Fisher & Gibran White

Thirty to forty miles off the west coast of Vancouver Island exists a fishery so exciting, so cutting edge, that it has quickly become the season end passion of many anglers. There is a six-week window commencing around the middle of August, when thousands of Albacore Tuna pass along our offshore waters within easy reach of our substantial fleet of large fully-equipped vessels. For many this is the highlight of the season and it's not just about the fishing, but the entire experience.

The adventure starts with a final check of TerraFin websites, the up-dated weather forecast, a hearty breakfast, and a first-light departure from Newton Cove Resort in Esperanza Inlet, only fifteen minutes from the open ocean and ideally located to access the tuna fishing grounds.

As we travel westward together towards the offshore waters, with never less than two boats, the rugged

coastal shoreline slowly fades into the distance. The water changes from its' inshore emerald green to a deep clear piercing aqua blue. Albatross with six-foot wingspans are gliding effort-



lessly across the surface only inches above the swells, searching for bait fish. Mega pods of dolphins are dropping by for frequent visits and majestic humpback whales can provide extra entertainment at any moment. Sun-fish will also frequently appear drifting across the surface riding the warm water currents north.

The pace begins to slow as the immense body of water below and its rhythmic movements relax you into a trance-like state. We are looking for five key signs: correct water temperature of 13 to 18 degrees Celsius (56-65 degrees Fahrenheit); chlorophyll concentrations (the "Blue Water"); surface activity such as feeding birds and bait fish; a variety of sardines, mackerel, shrimp, squid and of course, the frenzied feeding Albacore Tuna. We always have one driver and a deckhand, ensuring that we have two sets of eyes constantly scanning the horizon for these signs.



To enhance our chances of harvesting the tuna we spread out and set the gear to cover a multitude of depths. Be prepared to deal with the full-spectrum of fishing conditions and to address them with an arsenal of lure choices varying in color, size and style. Large crankbait type diving plugs like X Rap Magnum Rapalas and top water lures such as Zukers, Jet Heads and Tuna Feathers work well. We generally troll at 6 to 8 mph with at least two top-water lures and two sub-surface lures.

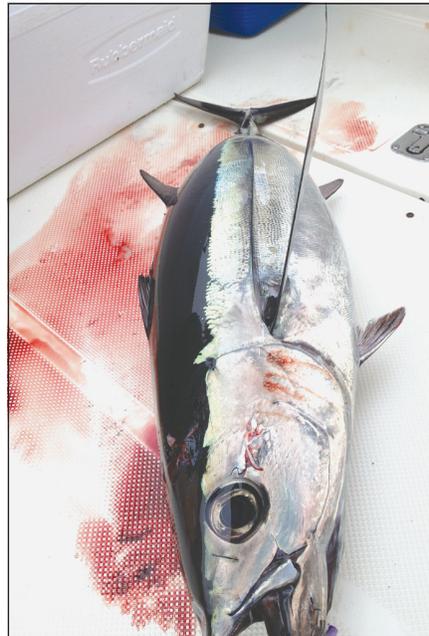
Keep in mind that Albacore may tend not to strike larger lure sizes and as a rule, darker colors work best early in the morning, on dark days, and in the evenings. As the day brightens, lighter coloured lures become the better producers. As the sun continues to grow stronger, try running the diving plugs deeper in the water. Additionally, as the wind begins to blow and ocean conditions become choppy, Tuna Feathers may become less effective as they spend too much time skipping across the surface. This is a good time to consider switching over to heavier types of jigs.

When we get on the fish the helm commences a figure eight pattern and calls the other boats over to where the action is. It's important to communicate and co-operate with others in the area. When the action starts, it happens fast, very fast.

It is not unusual for three reels to

start screaming at once. It can be utter mayhem; the rush most avid anglers spend a lifetime waiting to experience.

Even though the tuna seem to have five times the strength and ten times the tenacity of a chrome 25lb Chinook, guests somehow manage to bring these relentless torpedoes close enough to the boat so they succumb to the gaff. Once onboard they are instantly bled and submerged into large coolers filled with a concoction of salt ice and seawater for twenty to thirty minutes. When sufficiently chilled, the prized catch is removed and placed on ice for the journey home.



Albacore Tuna is one of our favourite eating fish, whether it be lightly seared or consumed raw with a drizzle of soy and wasabi after being flash frozen for 24 hours. The texture, combined with the taste, is like none other. A hard earned, hard fought delicacy for sure.

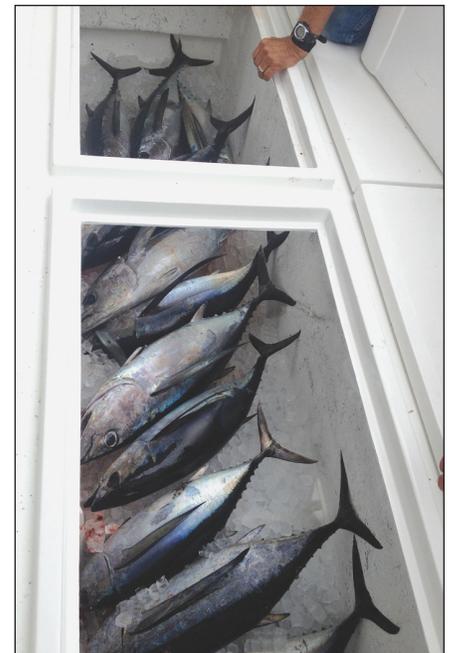
Beta:

- Never, ever go offshore alone! Always travel with at least one other boat and stay in regular radio contact.
- Pay very close attention to the weather conditions and forecasts. If it is going to blow over 20 knots, stay inside and fish for salmon.
- Find a blog where avid Albacore Tuna fishermen exchange ideas, tips and techniques.
- For the serious tuna fisherman,

subscribe to a satellite imagery website such as Terrafin or Seaview for up-to-date and changing currents and water temperatures, as well as chlorophyll levels. We use these sites to identify three destination weigh points prior to departure each day.

- Take care of your catch! Tuna are warm blooded so they need to be bled immediately, put into a salt ice slur, and then kept on ice. This will require an abundance of storage space on board to ensure they are kept in prime condition. Once back at the dock, clean your catch immediately, then vacuum-pack and flash freeze it.
- Hire a professional, experienced tuna guide for a day or two to show you the ropes. Alternatively, stay at Newton Cove Resort with your own boat and follow us out for the day. We have an endless supply of shaved salt ice and the only Government approved fish processing facility in the area. We would be happy to show you a great Tuna Time!

Tight lines, be safe and good luck!



For more information contact:
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