

Fun and Education for Younger Sailors

Of Flying Fish and Sailing Cats

Over 110 years ago Joseph Knight was a cook on the full-rigged ship *Balclutha*. He loved to tell stories about ship-board life, but he liked to have a little fun with his listeners by mentioning objects in his stories that couldn't possibly have existed 110 years ago. Use your imagination and pretend Joseph Knight could see into the future. Read the story below and see if you can identify the five things that do not belong. Circle the words when you find them.

Being a cook aboard a sailing ship like *Balclutha* was a challenge every day. Not only did I have very little to work with, but I heard complaints all the time about the quality of the food. This is a story about the time I gave the sailors a challenge and they were outperformed by a cat.

One calm day in the spring of 1890, we were several days out of San Francisco and I was thinking about dinner . . . well, actually I was thinking about dessert. There were only a few Oreo cookies left so I set about to make some "duff" for the crew. I chopped up some hard tack (a hard biscuit made of flour and water) until it was powdery and mixed it up with a little grease left over from the previous night's stew. Then I stirred in a handful of raisins. Usually I'd pour the batter into a canvas bag and boil the whole thing until it was cooked through, but on this particular day, I decided to just toss it in the microwave. Two minutes on medium and you're done!

The main course was more challenging. Most of the foods I made were stews-lobscouse or crackerhash- and it was hard to make them appealing without fresh vegetables or fresh meat. There was simply nothing in the refrigerator. All I had to use were dried or preserved foods: hard tack; peas; beans; frozen pizza; a little bit of dried fruit; and beef or pork that had been preserved in salt. I had started to mash up some hard tack for a stew when one of the sailors stopped and

made a not-very-nice comment about my planned meal. "Hey!" I said, "Why don't you do something about it and catch me a fish or two?"

That afternoon, he and some others went fishing, substituting a strip of canvas for bait. I guess the fish weren't

fooled because an hour later none of them had caught any fish. Discouraged, they lay around on the deck, watching television.

Stretch, the cat, was laying about as well but she had one eye open, ever alert. Suddenly, a school of flying fish leapt out of the water not ten feet from where the sailors were sitting. The sailors gasped in despair as they realized the fresh food they wanted was so close and yet seemingly impossible to catch. Then one of those fish misjudged its leap and soared over the side of the ship. The cat moved so quickly, the sailors didn't even have time to get up. She leapt upwards, snagging that fish right out of the air. It seems that Stretch knew something that's true even today: if you're far from home and you've run out things to eat, you can always have food delivered!



Kansas, the cook, sitting outside the galley. Kansas is a member of the park's costumed living history group.



Beef preserved in salt and hard tack were typical foods eaten by sailors. What? No cheerios?

Microwaves for use in the home: 1967
Portable television: 1959
Oreo Cookies invented 1912
Frozen pizza: 1957
Electric refrigerator: 1927