

Breeder eater's

Most of the fishermen and fisherwomen I know practice catch and release. This is the best way to preserve a fishery for future generations and also guarantee that we will have fish to catch ourselves.

There is nothing wrong with keeping enough fish to eat. I love to fry up a batch of freshly caught walleyes and eat like a king. The fish I keep are generally going to be in the low to middle range of legal size fish. The St. Louis River is where I do most of my walleye fishing. It is a great body of water that is full of walleyes. The minimum size you can keep legally is 15 inches. I will keep a fish up to about 20 inches. Anything over that normally I will put it back. Sometimes, if they are hooked too badly you have to keep them no matter how big they are. That's just the way it is.

When you get up to the five-pound category or larger, those are the fish we refer to as "breeders". They have the potential to produce a lot of little walleye's, which may grow up to be bigger walleye's. At least that's my opinion, and after all, I am the world's foremost authority on my opinion.

One of my favorite things to do is fish in tournaments. I'm not talking about the professional walleye tournaments. I mean local events sponsored by different groups or organizations. Kind of like local golf tournaments where the amateurs compete mostly for bragging rights among themselves.

Tournament fishing makes you a better fisherman. You have to have a plan laid out beforehand so you can better utilize the allotted time given for the event. Or you can just be lucky and catch the winning fish just because you happened to be in the right spot at the right time. Both systems can work. I like to think the plan works best.

We were fishing in a small company tournament a couple of years ago and most of the people fishing in it were the catch and release type. Most, not all. One of the participants, Dan, who shall remain nameless, showed up half-way through the event. He didn't have a boat to fish out of so he went with my fishing partner Scott's little brother who is also named Scott. (It's a long story.)

Dan and Scott headed out to one of the better spots on the river and started fishing. There were only a couple of hours left before the tournament ended. I was fishing a little ways away from them in my boat and happened to look out towards them. Dan was standing up in the boat, his rod was bent in half. Obviously he had a nice fish on. We were a couple hundred yards away but when they netted the fish I told my partners "wow look at the size of that fish". It was a slob.

Scott unhooked the fish for Dan, who had been fishing for all of fifteen minutes, and asked him if he wanted to take a picture of it before he threw it back in. Dan said “picture, hell I’m going to take it home and cook it, we’ve got company coming tonight”. I’m not sure but I think Scott was contemplating throwing Dan overboard, not the fish.

Needless to say, Dan’s fish won first place in the event. To this day however, Dan is known as “the breeder eater”. I’m not so sure that the fish even tasted that good. The river fish of that size aren’t nearly as good eating as the smaller ones. For good eating and the preservation of the sport, don’t be a breeder eater.