



news from the brewmaster

Some have asked me about the name 'Landsman'.

Why would I name a beer so?

Didn't really want to get into it, seeing as it's such a sensitive issue, but, I named it in tribute to the men and women who harvest and process seals in this province. While I cannot imagine doing it myself, I recognize the hunt as essentially positive in so many ways.

My perspective on it goes something like this:

1. I am not a vegetarian. I take great comfort/pride/sustenance from being at the top of the food chain. While I think that most mammalian agriculture is an incredible waste of food resources (not to mention the methane that most ruminants burp and fart all day/every day, 24 hours a day, destroying

our ozone), I do eat and enjoy most farmed meat, on at least a monthly occasion. I also occasionally eat 'wild' meat as well (moose, caribou, venison, rabbit etc.)

I fully understand the brutality of slaughter. I have witnessed various 'killing floors' where the meat we eat is killed. I have also seen farm animals slaughtered in a much less industrial way at the farm itself. However it is done, there is a tremendous amount of blood and gore. I understand this can be very distasteful to witness for many, especially red blood on white ice, as is the case in the seal harvest. It is, however, a reality of harvesting animals. Perhaps we should all be more aware of such things. If nothing else, it may lend us a more respectful perspective on the people who raise and process our meat (not to mention the animals themselves and the resources invested in their rearing). Such awareness could also, perhaps, positively impact on the level of gluttony in our culture. Food does not come from a store, it comes from a farm. That steak was recently part of a living, breathing creature.

2. Being at the top of the food chain is a large and important responsibility for many reasons, including the health of populations of lower organisms that I/you/we eat. In the case of farmed animals, we have assumed this position and engineered systems to manage these populations. In the case of the seals, a couple of factors have conspired to force humans alone to assume this



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responsibility. The Orcas ('killer whales') are now largely absent from the East Coast. The Polar Bears no longer come far enough south to significantly impact the breeding grounds of the herd. The demand for seal fur, both from an aboriginal and international perspective has diminished. All of these issues have largely been created by humans. I will not argue that point, but I will face the reality of the issue.

3. The herd has grown rapidly with the dissolution of the market for seal products. The herd population is now approaching 7 million individuals. This is not naturally sustainable in the absence of (an) apex predator(s). We have a responsibility to be that predator. Why? Nature is a funny thing. As a population exceeds the resources necessary for its sustenance, it will crash. More than likely from disease. Personally, I would rather harvest a few million seal pelts for incredibly warm, water repellant outerwear than to see the same population wash up dead and stinking from disease on our shores. But that's just me and my environmental consciousness, I guess.

4. The number one cause of seal death is separation from (as a pup) its mother. Number two is starvation. Human harvesting (currently) has virtually no impact on herd numbers.

5. Seal meat and oil is an extremely valuable and marketable commodity as are the pelts. Sealing is a vital part of the history, culture, folklore, economy and diet of Newfoundland and Labradorians.

6. Baby seals are cute. Adult seals are not. They are vicious and voracious predators. Many fishermen have witnessed their often wasteful predation of fish whereby they only eat a certain part of the fish and discard the rest. In the absence of population management by humans, the herd will decimate existing fish stocks. This will precede a natural population collapse of the herd.

Wow. Quite a mouthful.

I know this world is difficult to navigate sometimes. I know it is difficult being a post-modern human with little connection to the earth and her resources. It is not enough to dismiss our responsibilities to the ecosystem in the face of human egotism. There is too much of import at stake. Is it too much to expect a little rational thought? I hope not.

Good luck and good beer,

Pax.

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