

## FLANDER GIGGIN' SOUTHERN STYLE

Kelly Brassie

[Assignment: The assignment is the same as for "The Ellis Chocolate Chip."]

(1) Nothing interests a southerner more than good cooking. Perhaps more satisfying, however, is the southern tradition of gathering one's own food; the meal is all the more meaningful when the meat has been killed and the vegetables grown by hand. On Cumberland Island in southern Georgia, a favorite dish is prepared every Saturday night. The main course, flounder, allows no margin for error in preparation; there is only way to catch and kill a flounder.

(2) Flounder, or "flander" as southerners say, is a flat fish which resembles a spade-shaped pancake. At the tip of the spade lie two beady green eyes which are directly responsible for the aggression and gumption one must employ when hunting the creature. Because the fish is furtive and frightful in appearance, it is far more enjoyable to flander-hunt in a drunken state. Here begins the proper method to gig a flander.

(3) The best time to gig or stab a flander is at low tide in the nighttime. This is usually around two o'clock in the morning which provides ample early-evening time to put children to bed, clean the dinner dishes and take a nap. At approximately ten-thirty, all interested parties should gather around the dining room table for a "pre-flanderin' fire-up." This ritual consists of a game of Trivial Pursuit, a good many cigarettes and several shots of good liquor. By twelve-thirty the warmed-up southerners are ready to begin loading the rusty, doorless flanderin' truck with all the necessary gear. Proper instruments include two large innertubes with galvanized apple-bobbing tubs lodged in them, a car battery, Avon Skin So Soft, five bags of ice, four cases of Michelob beer, six sharpened gigs and six water-tight submersible lights. After generously applying the Skin So Soft, so incredibly putrid-smelling it keeps the Georgian skeeters away, all should board the truck and meditate on the night ahead.

(4) Heading towards the beach all must keep their heads low to avoid being crowned by low-hanging Spanish moss. As the dunes approach everyone should crouch low in the flanderin' truck to avoid being thrust vertically into a branch. After gaining enough speed to conquer the steep dunes, the little truck, used only for flanderin', should turn left and begin the journey towards the creek. Each southerner has a favorite creek to fish in, but flander are most plentiful in Christmas Creek. There are no road signs, in order to preserve the secret, so the party must carefully watch the horizon to know when the

flanderin' truck is parallel to the creek. The second the Brunswick lighthouse comes into view it is time to turn left, after which the party will be situated at the creek's edge.

(5) The time has come to assign "the fool." The fool is the person who, through too many shots of liquor, has been rendered useless to the group for catching fish. Since the fool has become a hazard with a gig, he or she will act as a sled dog, pulling the tethered innertubes through the water. In one innertube the car battery is placed and the other holds the bags of ice and the beer which will be consumed during the jaunt. The load will shortly become burdensome for the fool, but everyone must contribute. The battery is placed in the tub and the lights are plugged in. Each semi-sober southerner is given a light and a gig, which resembles a large fondue fork. With lights submerged, the swaying, yelling, tactless crew should forge ahead in knee deep water.

(6) The first hour will most likely be uneventful and a few of the flanderers will become frustrated. Luckily, flander are very stupid fish and will be found eventually by the determined crew. They are insensitive to light, noise and current and burrow only a half inch below the sand's surface. As the crew walk along they must search for the flander's shape and his exposed glowing eyes. When a crew member spots what resembles a flander, he is to make a scene: flailing his arms in the air, he is to exclaim, "Lordy! It's a flander and I'm gonna git 'im!" All the crew should stop dead in their tracks and point their lights toward the flander, even if the more sober southerners can clearly see that it is not a flander. If it is not an actual flander, all should agree unanimously that it really did resemble a killer flander. If it is a true fish, however, all should surround it and stare triumphantly into its green eyes and shout obscenities. The person who sighted the fish should pass his light to the envious party-member on his right and crouch menacingly over the flander and raise his gig. After careful aim, he should drive the gig through the fish, right between its beady eyes. The flander will flip around and sand and water will fly everywhere, but the fish will stay put. After recovering from the excitement, the gigger should get psyched for the dirty part of the job, getting the flander out of the water.

(7) With the left arm bearing down on the gig, the skilled person should place his right hand under the flat fish, avoiding its dorsal spines. He should find the gig which has been buried in the sand and is holding the flander to the creek bed. He should slowly raise the flopping flander by the palm of the hand and walk to the bank of the creek. Once on the beach, he should allow the tired, bleeding flander to drop to the sand. After waiting for it to settle flat, the crew member should take the handle of his gig and whack the flander five or six times on the back of the head. The flander can now

be hand-thrown like a frisbee into the empty beer tub where it will be kept cool by the remaining ice. Care must be taken, however, to avoid the fool, who by this time has passed out in the inner tube.

(8) And so the trip will continue into the morning; bloody flanders will fill up the tubs, just waitin' to be cleaned and fried back at the homestead. When the sun rises, all members should board the truck and figure out individual totals. The most skilled fisherman will get to eat the first piece of the specially-battered fish for which Cumberland Island is famous.