



A little family bonding on the ice (submitted by Garry Fisher)

ICE FISHING IN THE 1000 ISLANDS

Fantastic Fun for All Ages

By Lorraine Payette

As the ice thickens up, many people dream about ice fishing. Ah, the romance! A man cave on runners. Haul it out onto your favourite spot, bring your favourite snacks and beverages, drop a line and you're ready to go...

Slow down, buddy – ice fishing has changed, and it's getting better.

"Everyone can ice fish as long as they have a fishing license," says Garry Fisher, founder of the Big Bass Canada tournament and 2nd Annual 1000 Islands Perch/Pike Ice Fishing Derby. "In Ontario fishing licences expire on December 31, so on January 1, make sure to get them renewed."

Ice is crucial in ice fishing – without it, you're simply dropping a line in cold water in colder weather.

"Ice can be tricky," he says. "On the River, it can be 8" (20 cm) thick in one spot and can go down to 3" (8 cm) only 10' (3 m) away

from you if there's a current underneath. You have to know the body of water you are going out on, so always ask a local or look out to see if there is anyone on the ice before you head out."

For safety's sake, Fisher likes to make sure the ice is at least 4-5" thick, preferably clear and black in colour, instead of white and spongy. He also strongly recommends bringing a properly charged cell phone, and fishing with a buddy.

Another important factor is staying properly warm.

"I always make sure I have my layers ready," he says. "You can always take things off if you are too hot, but you can't put it on if you don't have it with you."

He starts with long underwear, followed by a tee-shirt, sweat shirt or sweater and a flotation suit or water skiing life jacket. This is topped by a snow suit. The flotation

device adds warmth as well as being able to keep you from sinking if you fall through the ice. Good warm socks are needed, with an extra pair carried in a zip-close bag, and warm winter boots. The boots are crucial to keeping warm because your feet are always in contact with the ice. Finally, he brings three pairs of gloves – one to wear, one in a pocket and the last in a zip-close bag in case the others get wet. This wardrobe works equally well for ice fishers of all ages.

Once you're properly dressed and on the right ice, you need to get at the fish.

"I have a little 6" auger that you crank down with your hands," says Fisher. "You can catch perch in most bays where there was a weed bed in the summer, and the best thing to keep kids interested in fishing is catching fish all day long. Just make sure you keep the auger away from the children – the sharp blades could cut their fingers."

When everything is ready, it's time to get out and fish. Bring your favourite equipment, try your favourite baits and lures, but above all, have fun. Not only is ice fishing great fun for everyone of all ages, you don't need a big budget or fancy equipment to go out and participate.

"It's what it's all about – having a good time fishing with friends and family at any time of year," he says. **LH**

For even bigger fun ice fishing, the 2nd Annual Perch/Pike Ice Fishing Derby is open to everyone, promising fun fishing for all ages and prizes for everyone. Falling on February 7, 2015, more details can be found at www.bigbasschallengecanada.com or by e-mailing garry@bigbasschallengecanada.com.

Also there is the LYNDHURST 7th Annual Ice Fishing Derby Saturday, February 21st 2015 8AM – 5pm Tickets \$20 per person hosted by WING'S LIVE BAIT & TACKLE there are Cash & Prizes – Open to all Local Lakes • Fish Must be fresh, call for rules and info & tickets: 413-415 lyndhurst Rd, Lyndhurst, ON 613-928-2382 siderisjp@sympatico.ca (John Sideris).

Lastly the Grenville Fish & Game club is hosting the 18th Annual Pike Ice Fishing Derby on Saturday February 28, 2015 6am-4pm at Elevator Bay (the fishing area is on St Lawrence River). There are cash prizes and a Free Perch Derby for Kids (14 and under). Ticket pricing is adults \$10 and Youth (14 & under) \$5. For more details and information about the tournament call Lynn Homes @ 613-925-3408.