

Peeling shrimp and oral history

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In brief...

A marine cultural heritage project on the oral history and transmission of intangible heritage

Some hundred children (9-10 year old) and elderly people (living in senior care centers at the Belgian coast) met with each other within the frame of The Week of Taste (November 2013). The seniors learned the children the skills for peeling brown shrimp, so they could (re)discover the taste of fresh shrimp. Meanwhile the seniors told about their old days: oral history stories of how fishing and processing of, and cooking with brown shrimp evolved over the period of some generations.

In the classroom

Educational kit (age 9-10)

- www.katrienvervaele.be/garnalenverhalen.html
- information on biology, fishery context and history of brown shrimp
- basic principles of oral history and intangible heritage, basic rules for interviews
- questions and blanks exercise leaves
- optional: introductory session by organizers



Hoda (10): "I've seen the eggs of the shrimp! We learned that the light colored ones are fresh eggs, full of yolk. The dark colored eggs have larvae in them."



Foto: Nationaal Archief, Nederland (1907)

Katrien (52): "At the coast many women earned some extra money by peeling shrimp for fishmongers, hotels and restaurants (domestic industry). Her children first had to help when they came from school: first peeling, than playing!"

At the senior care center



Thomas (9): "How did your mother prepare shrimp when you were a young girl?"



Avacín (10): "Did you had to help your mother often when she was peeling shrimp?"



Ian (8): "First you take the shrimp in the middle and pull at its tail. Then you remove some shell near the head before you can remove the shrimp..."



Jan (69): "At the age you are now, I never had eaten shrimp. Later we had a fisherman as a neighbour. We could buy the shrimp he brought home. They were sold per glass (3 glasses a kilo)."



Germaine (84): "I used to join my mother buying fish and shrimp in the fish auction. We sold them, going from house to house."



Jeanine (78): "Shrimp croquettes are a very modern recipe. At my parents house, we used to eat shrimp with bread and beer, sometimes in an omelet or in a tomato. The shells were cooked as a basis for soup."

Conclusions

- Inter-generational transfer of knowledge and skills
- Confronting youngsters with their recent history
- Inter-generational social contact
- Improved skills of peeling and taste experience
- Improved knowledge on shrimp and context
- Improved language skills