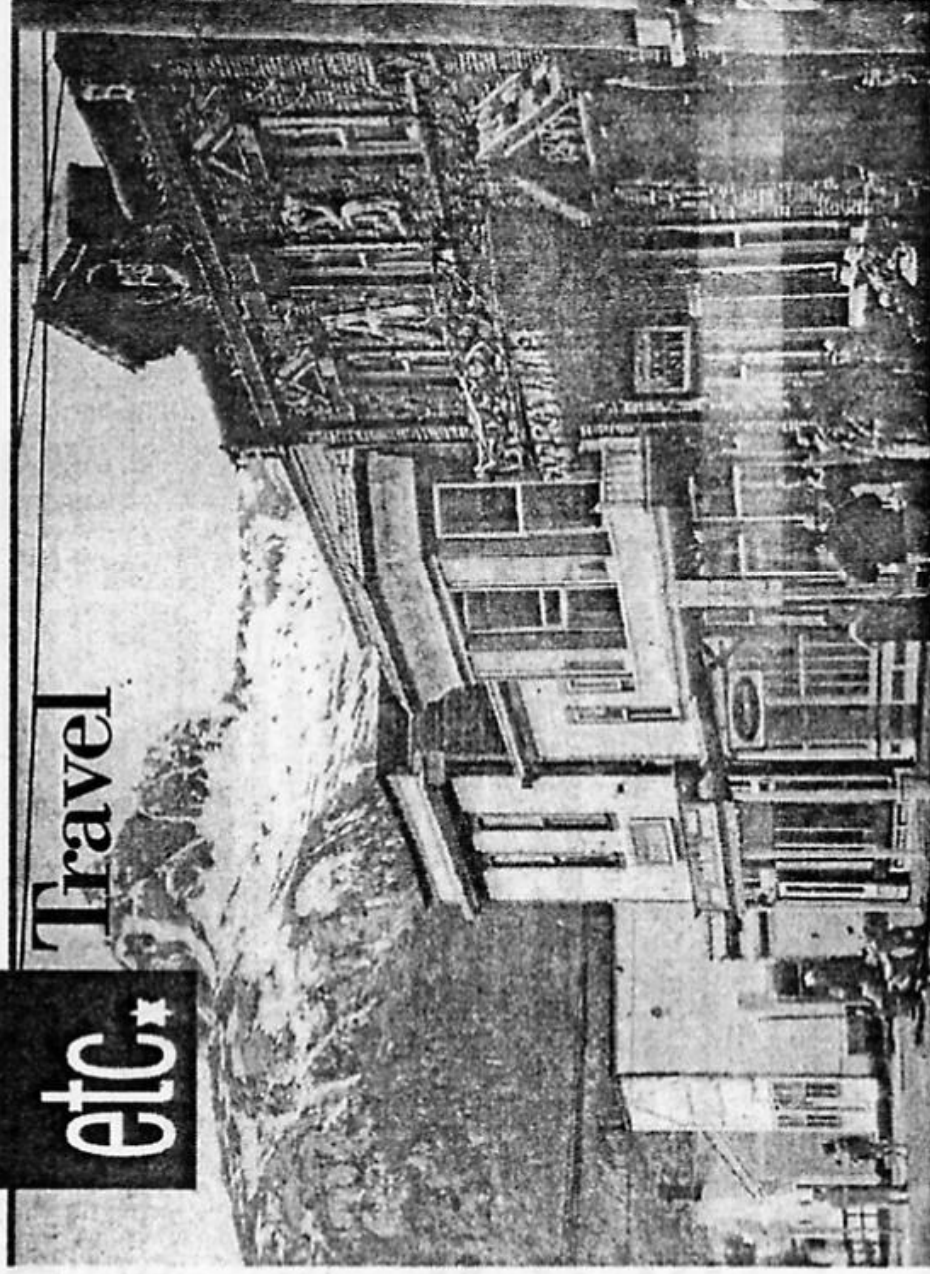


etc.*

Travel

Photos by Bob Rosenberg



It's a day in the life of Skagway.



AA**fish**ka baked (and broiled)

A cruise leads to many ports
— and portions of food

■ BARBARA ANN ROSENBERG
Special to the Jewish Exponent

“Would you like to go shopping with us for fresh salmon?” asked a friendly female voice at the other end of the phone line. “Not in a supermarket. Not in a fish store ... at the source! In Ketchikan, Alaska. In the company (no less) of Michel Roux, owner of a Michelin three-star restaurant and executive chef of the *Celebrity Cruise Line!*”

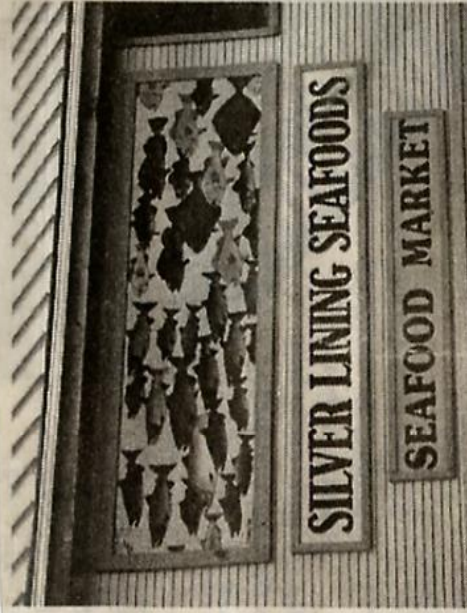
The voice continued with even more enticements. “We will be sailing,” she said, “on a maiden voyage of the spanking-new cruise ship *Galaxy* that carries almost 1,900 passengers. We will board in Vancouver, British Columbia, to sail through the Inside Passage en route to Alaska, where we will meet Chef Roux in Juneau, capital of the state and one of the stops on the trip.”

Even better, the friendly voice went on, “the chef will plan a special dinner for us — salmon, of course, and Alaskan halibut — and perhaps even some red snapper!”

Then, in a day or so (my geography of Alaska and the distances between ports, was, to put it mildly, sketchy) we would be stopping in Ketchikan to shop for the ingredients for the feast, or to “provision,” as they put it in sailors’ terms.

When I recovered from my initial surprise and delight at having been invited to take part in this adventure, my head went into a “full speed ahead” fantasy. We would meet the chef, and (I imagined) we would examine, prod and poke the vegetables, the fruits, the fish.

I would have leaped at the chance to meet Chef Roux again even if it weren’t Alaska (where I had yearned to go, but somehow, until now, found myself



Where are these fish headed? Ketchikan!

always heading in different directions). The man was so charming, so debonair, so mischievous — so quintessentially French!

We had met a few years before when my husband and I were traveling through Berkshire, England, and had stopped at his glorious small hotel/restaurant, the Waterside Inn, located at a scenic curve on the Thames, about an hour from London. However, notwithstanding the fact that Chef Roux’s restaurant is in England, his food was as thoroughly French as he is.

A few weeks, later my husband and I found ourselves in Vancouver, ogling this beautiful new ship pulled up at the saicloth-festooned dock just a few blocks from the center of the city.

A short while and a few toots of the horn later, we

sengers. But, where was Chef Roux? Our star player was missing!

Not to worry. As “the voice” had told me — but, in my excitement I had forgotten — Roux would be boarding the ship in Juneau, about halfway along the trip, to get acquainted with the several eager eaters (and writers and broadcasters) who had been invited to the gala.

In the interim, our huge ship was moving through the calm, protected waters of the Inside Passage, gliding past a ceaselessly unfolding panorama of beauty — of incredibly dense greenery and, eventually, snow-capped mountains that loomed behind the gentle hills along our course.

And, if, for some unfathomable reason, some people wearied of watching the beauty fan out in subtle change, there was plenty of activity on board — including, of course, usual shipboard activities like gambling, shopping and ... eating.

Offerings were pizza, hamburgers, snacks of all kinds, elaborate meals, served in the beautiful dining room or in a cafeteria.

And, of course, that will-breaker, the midnight buffet, complete with mammoth ice carvings.

Then there was swimming. Yes, swimming in heated pools (indoors and out) or gambling in hot tubs!

It was chilly enough to keep the glaciers in Glacier Bay from melting to any dangerous extent, but warm enough to see the little pieces of floating glacier (called “calves”) passing along in the water. On occasion we were treated to glimpses of wildlife such as sea mammals (including whales).

Then it was on to our first port of Skagway, a fitting first shore excursion filled with the lore of goldminers who had flocked there en route to the Klondike gold fields in search of their fortunes.

It was there that we took part in a most exciting experience: a helicopter flight to the top of a glacier. Outfitted in “clompy” boots and vests, people looked rather like space beings as they embarked and landed on the flat top of a huge, bumpy hunk of ice — a glacier that gave us as close a feeling of landing on the moon as most of us would ever likely experience.

The next day, we arrived in Juneau, where we set off by “bush plane” for a feast of West Coast salmon, barbecued over an open fire at a wilderness lodge.

Coming eye to eye with fresh salmon was quite an experience.

Later in the day, after we had a chance to explore the usual souvenir shops that sold all manner of “Smoky Bear” and hard-cooked canned and cryovac-wrapped smoked salmon (not at all like Nova) and, for some unknown reason, Colombian emeralds, we managed to sample a “halibutburger” and a beer at the Red Dog Saloon, a former miners’ hangout.

And we got a chance to meet Chef Roux.

In the style befitting a three-star chef with an international reputation, Roux appeared in garb more suitable for an intimate studio photo session than a stroll through a messy fish market. The market we encountered was brought to us, however, pristinely displayed on a refrigerated truck.

Just for the halibut

There were huge halibut — about 50 pounds each, larger than any I’d ever seen. Huge salmon, too; gleaming, fresh — just out of the sea with clear eyes and bright gills.

Hours later, all that gorgeous fish was metamorphosed into a feast fit for, yes, kings and queens.

The presentation befitted a display of crown jewels.

Speaking of crown jewels, Ketchikan has a handsome, sophisticated jewelry store, located on a side street of “downtown.” Joseph Machini is a particularly striking shop because its major focus is on the stunning work of an Israeli artist, Frank Meister.

Could there be more? Or had we reached nirvana?

We still had a few days of our return passage aboard *Galaxy*. Plenty of time to enjoy the shows, the music and the dancing. ■