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What It's Like Fishing for Lobster as a Woman

"It's super hard to be a woman in this industry," Krista Tripp, a third-generation female lobsterman explains.

By **Bridget Shirvell**

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PHOTO: LOBSTER FROM MAINE

It's 5 a.m. and Krista Tripp is loading her 36-foot boat, preparing to head out on the waters off of Spruce Head, [Maine](#). She'll spend roughly the next 12 hours on the boat, [working either by herself or with a stern\(wo\)man to bait traps, measure lobsters, pull up buoys, hauling anywhere from 200 to 300 lobsters](#) in the day, which she'll sell at the local wharf.

"I love being on the ocean," Tripp says. "I've always thought it was a lot of fun. It's makes me happy." The 34-year-old lobster fisherman is one of the [few women](#) in what is still largely a male dominated industry. According to [NPR](#), as of 2016, less than 10 percent of the lobster licenses in Maine were held by women.

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"It's super hard to be a [woman in this industry](#)," Tripp says. "It especially is in this area where it used to be unheard of to see a woman on the back of the boat." Lobstering is physically demanding, dangerous work, and has traditionally been considered a man's job. Yet, Tripp can't remember a time when she wasn't lobstering. A third-generation fisherman, she grew up going out on her dad's boat, watching the crew work from the time she was a little girl. "It was always interesting to see what kind of creatures came up on the traps," Tripp says. "I loved being on the boat." By the time she was 11, Tripp was officially working in the industry, baiting bags for fishermen. When she was 13, she worked on her first boat, lobstering for the summer with her grandfather.

After that, there wasn't anything else she could imagine doing. Tripp spent her high school summers lobstering with her brother, John. And while patiently waiting to get her commercial lobster license, a process that took 12 years, she's dragged for scallops and sea urchins and worked the stern of boats for other lobstermen.

These days, July through December she's on her boat the F/V Shearwater-her grandfather's former boat, which she bought from her grandmother after he passed-as much as possible. When she can find another woman to work stern, it helps lighten the load and provide her with a sense of community but she's also used to working solo. "I've hauled my fare share of gear by myself but I've been lucky [at times] to be able to find a stern girl who helps me out," Tripp says, adding that over the past few years she's noticed more women getting involved in the industry. "I find it comforting, cause you feel like you're not really accepted by the men, they don't include you or they don't want to include you."

She eats lunch on the boat, packing healthy, natural, organic foods including vegetables and hummus, protein bars, fruit, lots and lots of water, and sometimes beef jerky or tins of tuna for extra protein. "I don't eat a lot of sugar. I try to just stick to water and not fill up on sugary drinks," Tripp says. "It seems to work for me and gives me a good amount of energy to last all day long but not be too full or too wound up."

The other essentials you'll always find Tripp with are the things you'd likely expect: sunscreen, chapstick, and her cell phone.



PHOTO: LOBSTER FROM MAINE

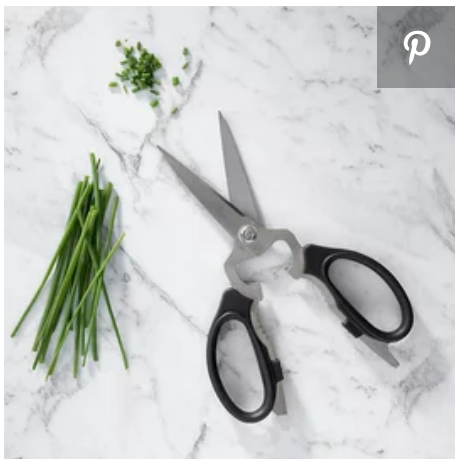
Last winter Tripp worked with her dad, who has his federal fishing license and fishes off-shore year round. It's a career progression that Tripp has considered for herself: "I've wanted to go in that direction and be one of the first offshore lobsterwomen, but I need a federal license, a bigger boat, and basically I'd need to invest a lot more money," Tripp says. "I'm still contemplating what to do."

While Tripp grew up in the lobster industry and loves it, she's not sure how sustainable it will be over the long term. She's noticed many more people are

rigging up to fish offshore as various things, including climate change, have made it necessary to go further to catch what was caught closer to land 10-15 years ago.

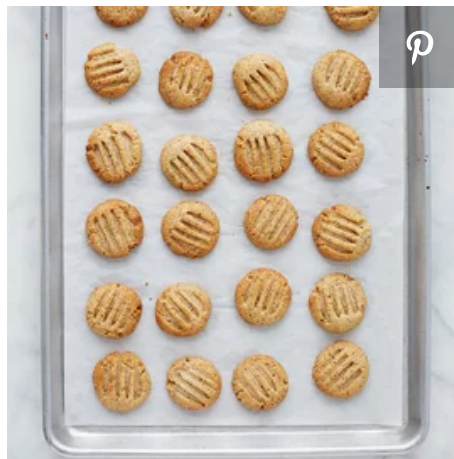
She recently bought a one-acre oyster farm, Aphrodite Oysters, that she hopes to expand to five acres over the next few years. She's been selling the oysters at restaurants and markets throughout Maine. "I am worried about climate change issues and other issues in the lobster industry that could have a drastic impact. By diversifying now I'm planning for the future," Tripp explains.

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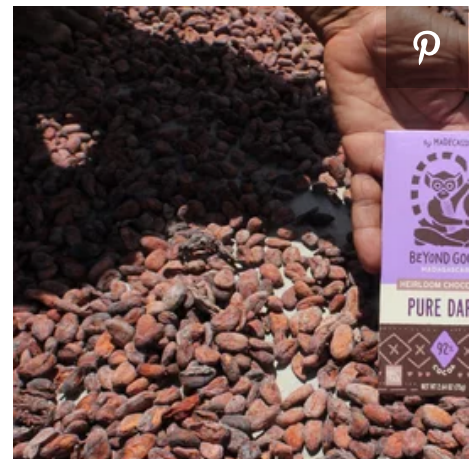
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