

REELING IN THE NEW YEAR

I can still feel the wind in my hair, the sun on my face, and the cool spray of saltwater as we sliced through the waves heading 30 miles offshore. Sarasota, Florida always gets me going.

Allow me to rewind a bit. This journey begins with my annual burning desire to continue fishing after everyone else puts their boat up in New York City. Chasing the striper blitzes, jigging for blackfish, and running for tuna come to a close when the temperature drops below freezing. Desperation for fishing grips me hard this time of year, and being trapped in “big city life” is the cage I rattle on a constant basis.

Fortunately, I get to have the last laugh at NYC, as I hit up NBC Sports’ GAFF Life Capt. Jimmy Nelson on the speed dial, book a flight, and jet away to my personal fishing paradise. Hardcore fishing is the blissful constant in my life. It’s been that way since my father introduced me to it while growing up in the Florida Keys. Saltwater runs through my veins. Unfortunately, being trapped living in New York City makes me a fish out of water. However, I’m on to something, because who better to take me fishing during the winter months than Capt. Jimmy Nelson?

As we all know, getting out on the water is what the salt life is all about! The majority of the earth is covered with salt water, so pioneering this realm is undeniably cool. So cool, in fact, that I spent my New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day fishing. No New Year’s Eve party for me; would rather be fishing. Trading champagne bubbles for sea foam, I rested up for my offshore journeys in those early mornings. That’s also serious dedication from Capt. Jimmy Nelson and GAFF Life’s “A” videographer, Mark Sousou. Waking up for fishing trips is better than Christmas morning... it even

beats Disney World, hands down! As we cut the waves, I smiled and thought about all of those poor suckers stuck in the concrete jungle I call home.

While gritting my teeth and griping the bending Deuce rod, I couldn’t help but appreciate the sweat running down my face a little more than usual, as I remembered the frigid NYC tuna trip I took a few weeks ago. Thoroughly loving the deep-sea thrashing, I jammed the pole into my thigh and forced those fish into the boat. Born and raised a Florida girl, cranking Sarasota fish out of the water is always a nostalgic experience, and Capt. Jimmy takes it to a new level.

With tight lines, we cracked jokes on each other and talked fishin’. Jimmy and Mark are a riot, I assure you. I will definitely be finagling my way to travel worldwide with these guys. While we chummed the water, Capt. Jimmy showed me how to tie a few new knots, and I learned about the breakaway they had on the anchor. We fought some nice gag grouper, red grouper, mangrove snapper, flounder, bonita, and sheepshead. Heading inshore, we prowled and hooked some snook and landed a few black drum. With all of us joking around, the volume level needed to come down about three notches. We were spookin’ the snook!

Offshore the next day, we caught some serious grouper, bonita and snapper over several reefs. Bonita are always a fun fight and it took some muscle to reel them in! Just for the thrill, I must admit, I bugged the heck out of Capt. Jimmy to go for goliath grouper over a wreck in about 50 feet of water. It looked suspect for some action, so we put one of the bonita I caught down on a hand line. No luck with the goliaths because the water was too cold at 63 degrees. (Cold? Try freezing your butt off in Brook-



lyn while hunting blackfish and tuna in December!) It would’ve been awesome to wrangle one of those goliath bad boys into the boat. But hey, there’s always next time. There’s still a lot of fishing to come to satisfy this girl’s craving. Unhook me from big city life and bring it on!

We had a full moon, high pressure, and two-foot seas... but gosh, I don’t want to write a fishing report here! The pictures in this article speak for themselves, really. What I can tell you is that as an accomplished angler, I had an amazing experience with Gaff Life’s Capt. Jimmy Nelson and videographer Mark Sousou. We fished hardcore and didn’t let New Year’s Eve 2013 slow us down. As the purple, pink, and bronze smudges of the sunset painted the Sarasota sky, I could taste the salt on my lips, hear the laughter that we shared, and feel the bites on my line.

Watching GAFF Life on NBC Sports will never be the same. I know I’ll be bouncing off the walls in my tiny Manhattan apartment while chomping at the bit to get out on the water with Capt. Jimmy again! This Florida-born fishergirl needs a steady dose of maritime adventure in order to stay satiated during the winter months in Manhattan. Jetting back to the Big Apple, a big smile illuminated my sun-kissed face; I’m already stoked on planning my next escape from big city life.

-Lace Allenius **G**

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