Trail Bytes: Late May Moab Trek 2006
How I started my 2006 Summer Vacation

By Chef Mark

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www.JeepGrilleAdventures.com

It had been 3 years since my last trip to the Mecca… and since I missed hunting season last fall I deemed it a necessity… a Moab adventure. With some upgrades to the drive train; such as a Ford 8.8 in the rear and recently installed Aussie Locker, I felt confident with a newly acquired trailer in tow all thanks to Josh at www.CrawlerTech4x4.com in Denver. The trailer itself has a unique history, as it had previously hauled rock up the well known Holy Cross Trail just south of Leadville, Colorado in 2000, to fix various spots en route to the "The City". The trailer has a CJ axle, with locking hubs (great conversation piece obviously not functional), 2.5 inch Rancho Springs, and 32 inch BFG MT's.

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The intent was to venture down along the Colorado River via Rabbit Valley following the Kokopelli Trail to Cisco, UT and then on to Moab. My plans changed slightly after some confusing map details. Rather than drive onward, not sure of the exact route and not wanting to waste gas, or get lost I backtracked slightly and set up camp on the top of a mesa. I purchased this great one-person camp tent that sets up in a matter of seconds, a Tent Cot if you will, at a local sporting goods store. There is also a two-person version which I hope to acquire in the future.

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The next day I backtracked and visited a section known as May Flats on the Colorado/Utah border. I had previously been to this location in 2002 for a food photo shoot for my Cookbook Jeep Grille Adventures. It is a nice spot to relax, camp, and watch the wonders of the Colorado River. Often times rafters cruise by floating this great river.

Onward to Moab from May Flats I followed a trail westward alongside some train tracks, not exactly sure where I would come out. This is part of the excitement of adventure of course. Although narrow in spots, it was not a hard section of trail by any means. I did come across an old cabin site along the way that was of unique interest.

After a considerable time of meandering I ended up at Westwater, a common spot for rafters to put in just south of I-70 in eastern Utah. Heading north back to I-70 and onto Highway 191 South, I pulled into Moab around 3pm just in time to set up camp before the dust storm. Wow what a dust storm it was, you could not see the whole valley, and fortunately I was out of the open desert and at Portal RV Park. To my benefit the storm passed and I was able to produce dinner after the intense dust storm that made visibility near zero.

Asian Style Alaskan Cod with Veggies and Noodles

Serves 2-4

8 Oz. Frozen Cod (a variety of other fish can be used)

1 Tbsp sesame oil or vegetable oil

1 Clove Garlic, sliced thin

4 Ea. Scallions, sliced 1-2 inch long

1 Carrot, Vichy Cut (fancy for sliced thin diagonally)

½ cup Broccoli Florets (frozen or fresh)

¼ cup Red Bell Pepper cut into strips

½ Lemon Juiced

1 tsp or Packet (like the ones you get from ordering take out) Soy Sauce

1 Packet Favorite Ramen (or like brand) Noodles

Optional Condiment: Sambal Chili Paste, a very spicy condiment found in most markets.

Method of Preparation:

In a separate pan heat up enough water to follow the directions for the Noodle Packet, this usually takes only three to four minutes to cook. Plan accordingly. I strain out all of the water, to eat more like a noodle rather than a soup as its intended purpose. VERY

IMPORTANT: Omit at least ½ if not ¾ of the seasoning packet when straining out all the water.

In a skillet (preferably non-stick for easy clean-up) heat up the oil over medium heat.
Add in the cod to the pan with the oil to sear until golden brown on one side.
Turn the cod to let cook through, until it flakes easily. Take out the cod and set aside.
Add the garlic and vegetables to cook through until tender.
Sprinkle the lemon juice and soy sauce over the contents, immediately add the pieces of cod back to the pan to help warm. Let simmer for 1 minute.
Serve over the LIGHTLY seasoned ramen noodles.

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Breakfast, 3-D and Dinner

With a great evenings sleep and no dust storms I had a Multi Grain Bagel with Villa Tatra's All Natural Smoked Colorado Trout www.villatatra.com for a mid morning breakfast.

1 Multi Grain Bagel or Bagel Flavor of your Choice (toasted)
2 Tbsp Cream Cheese (Regular, Fat Free or Flavored)
1 Tbsp Capers
1 slice Red Onion
1 Leaf of Lettuce; Romaine, Bibb or Green or Red Leaf
1 - 8oz. Package Villa Tatra Smoked Colorado Trout

Slice and toast the bagel halves in a skillet or over warm coals. Spread the cream cheese and place the capers in the cream cheese on one of the bagel halves. Finish with the lettuce, onion, trout and sprinkle some lemon juice over it. Cover with the other bagel half and enjoy.

Onward to a new trail for me north-east of town known as 3-D. It starts off very easy through a sandy canyon and up onto a steep, loose rock hill climb before entering small domes atop a cliff with views-a-plenty.

A fun and mildly challenging trail, (I would consider it more difficult in a stock vehicle) with extremely scenic views. This is how I would describe this trail, great ease and fun for a mildly modified/built vehicle.

A final hill climb with small step at the top makes for a white knuckle moment, I of course was unable to take a photo of that as I was alone when doing the trail the first time.

After a long day on the "rock" I was hungry for dinner of good beef and corn.

Skillet Seared Flank steak with Corn on the Cobb atop festive Brown Rice

Serves 2-4

1 each Flank Steak (approx 1.5 lb)

Your Favorite Steak Seasoning

1 Tbsp Vegetable Oil or Pan Spray

2 Corn on the Cobb Cut in Half Diagonally (for visual appeal)

1 Cup Pre Cooked Brown Rice mixed with ¼ cup Diced Bell Peppers.

Season Flank steak. Sear in skillet on both sides and cook until desired temp.**

If you like it MOOOING or as they call in industry Black and Blue (seared one side and served raw cold center) or Pittsburg Style (seared lightly on both sides with cold red center) Otherwise here is a helpful link on handling and cooking beef.

Once cooked to your liking, hopefully not well done, set aside to rest for 5 minutes before slicing. Make sure to slice against the grain, on an angle and no more than ¼ inch thick for best results.

**In a separate heated skillet place oil or pan spray, to brown the corn on all sides. Set corn to the sides of the pan and place cooked rice blend to heat through.

Serve steak slices with rice and corn. 3-D presentation optional.

"In this case I personally ate the WHOLE 1.5 lb flank steak along with all the other stuff, I am a growing Chef!"

"The presentation is reflective of what I experienced on the 3-D trail as a whole…a Chef's perspective!

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Poison Spider not once, not twice but three times and the third time is a charm!

Meeting up with former students and recent graduates of Johnson & Wales University in Denver, we attempted Poison Spider. The first attempt was with a Yellow Texas TJ that had never been to Moab and a member of the Nissan/X-terra Club, which was part of the Annual Nissan Club meeting in Moab that week. During the first attempt we made it to the waterfall obstacle with the X-terra popping a bead while on the obstacle. A quick assist with a hi-lift and change out of the spare we headed back to town.

After a quick snack of P,B & J, Zach with his Texas TJ and I headed back out to go up to the lookout point just before the "domes" on the Poison Spider trail.

After a day run and a quick look at some early American Indian "graffiti" along the Potash Road Canyon wall, it was back to town for dinner.

I do not have recipes from this point forward as the over 90 degree heat and not having my really good cooler, my meal plan had succumbed to the heat. So from here on out my choices were cheap eats in town.

Later that evening, it was decided to take my Jeep back up on Poison Spider to test out my rock lights and check out the slickrock at night.

The temperature was at least 10 degrees warmer than in town as the heat collected by the rocks by the daytime sun radiated back in the Moab night.

The star gazing was probably the most impressive I had ever seen. I Jeep'd up just through "the wedge" and sat atop the dome above. Although I wouldn't recommend taking your iron out on any trail at night and more so with only one vehicle. Night wheeling offers a new dimension and respect for the trail and surroundings not often seen by most. Please do so with extreme caution and with at least one or more properly equipped vehicles.

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Not much to report as we had to deal with both vehicles requiring minor repair work. Texas TJ needed front axle u-joints and while riding around in town in my Jeep we noticed a sidewall puncture. With the tire issue resolved with help from both crews at Big O Tires and American Car Care, a reminiscent and noticeable vibration came from the rear….a blown CV joint. A quick trip to Moab Powertrain owned by Chris Woods, yes of the "My Shafts a Woody: Tom Woods" lineage, had me on my way. If you have the know-how and tools or no tools this was the place to go. He sold you the part and provided you with the facility and tools to do the work yourself. Thanks a ton to Moab Powertain and cool lesson on how to hammer-tap (my favorite tool) u-joint caps out!

After all was said and done we heard rumor some folks were going to attempt Lion's Back. Wanting to see this legend of the trail firsthand, originally made famous from the video of a K-5 Blazer bouncing off the side with no brakes, we headed up to the area. We arrived only to find a Blue SUV that had careened off the opposite side and was still wedged in the crack from a previous year's deadly rollover. We had missed the folks attempting the trail…oh well no big deal.
Standing at the bottom of this so called trail, I easily realized…..NO WAY MAN!!!! I bow to all of those that have done it and to all those that plan on doing it, it's just not my cup of tea if you will, thank-you-very-much! To my understanding it has since been closed and condos are being built there.

2006:5:26

Last Day: 3-D-2 not a Close Encounter with a new Star Wars Character

Wanting to do a fairly decent trail with both Jeeps that would not break our rigs, I suggested we take the 3-D trail I had done earlier in the week. It was a scenic yet challenging trail for the Texan/Moab "Newbie"!

We did come across a lower section that I could not find a named route or directions for that traversed down into a canyon wash. We did not attempt this trail as we were unsure

of its difficulty and end outcome. I was also unfortunately short on gas. I guess I will have to research this and plan on a future trip to attempt it…darn another trip out to Moab I have to plan for what bum luck?!?

For the trip home I decided to head out a different route taking the road through Castle Valley. I highly recommend this route for its scenic value. There are also some roads that can be traveled off of this main route heading back to I-70.

Thanks to:

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