

Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 10: Daily Patterns

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August 11, 2013

1:00 am - I just woke up for my shift. The sun is low on the horizon, shrouded by thick fog again. It won't set at this latitude for another couple weeks. Now it almost skims the horizon. Every hour for the next eight hours I'll walk up to the bridge – the top level of the ship—and make observations of the ice, the melt ponds, the surface topography, and the weather to report back to the International Arctic Research Center. I also am on call to deploy an xctd or to assist Sigrid with her weather balloons. The xctd is a small, expendable sensor in a tube that measures conductivity, temperature, and depth.

4:00 pm - Later in the morning, between observations I searched the ship to see who else was up. At 6:30 am the kitchen was buzzing with people and wafting aromas of breakfast meats. Jared, whom the crew regards as the best baker in the Canadian Coast Guard, was making white chocolate chip cookies. A pan chock-full of pink fleshy salmon fillets awaited preparation on the counter. Wanda was slicing up fresh bell peppers, onions, and carrots for a stir-fry. Andrew was preparing cream of wheat for breakfast. Mike, the store keeper noticed me poking around in the walk-in coolers, and offered to give a tour of the main storage coolers. "There's more?" I ask in disbelief. "You haven't seen the most of it!"

We took the cargo elevator up one, two levels up to the freezer level into seemingly boundless walk-in freezers of meats, poultry, and dairy. I learned that most of our milk is frozen and must be slowly thawed over several days. After touring the indoor Arctic, I returned to the warm, steaming kitchen and ran into Warrick, one of the ship stewards who helps keep the kitchen running. He flashed his contagious smile as we exchanged greetings, then I headed back up to the bridge for another ice observation.

Days and nights blend together up here. Nights are light and people work around the clock. Meals, however, are only served during the day, and they help break up an otherwise continuous stream of time. At 7:30am breakfast is served; 11:30 dinner; 4:30 supper. Many of the crew members are from St. John's in Newfoundland, the home port of the Louis. By custom, the Sunday noon-time meal on the Louis is traditional 'Newfie' food. Today: Cornish game-hens, mashed turnips, boiled potatoes, gravy, peas and carrots, salted beef, and cream of mushroom soup.

A handful of vegetarians are on board, myself included. Blair Walsh, the chief cook, has designed a weekly, rotating *a la carte* menu. In addition to the main menu offerings, the galley has about five other choices with vegetarian options that can be made to order. Needless to say, no one goes hungry.

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