

FISHING

BRIDGEPORT'S GOT GREAT PEACHES

By Leonard

“There are HUGE peaches in this river!” Those are the exact words that Francesca Flammini kept hearing me state, over and over again while fishing the East Walker River out of Bridgeport, just last Saturday. I was going after these large, healthy California peaches with a Size-20 Beadhead Black and Silver Midge.

Ten days back, I get this text message from a Swiss-Italian friend who I haven't seen in about 10 years. Marco Annoni drops me a line a week ago Wednesday, informing me that he and his girlfriend are traveling throughout California, and that they'll pass through Mammoth. Annoni wants to grab a San Pelligrino and panini with me and catch up. The last time I saw Marco was the winter of 2003/04, before I lived in Mammoth, when Marco jumped the Atlantic Pond with three other Swiss-Italian good friends to ride Mammoth Mountain with me

for a week. That was an epic winter. It was good fun. I first met Marco back in the summer of '96, when I was living in Southern Switzerland. We go a ways back. He was a local wingman who hit the bars with me on a nightly basis, when I spent my days working in a Swiss supermarket, and nights getting into minor amounts of enjoyable trouble, all catch and release. Marco never learned much English. Showed up in the Eastern Sierra this time around with a different girlfriend than last time: Francesca, who spoke about the same amount of very little English as Marco. When Annoni told me that he wished to find me in Mammoth, I replied that the two of them best head up to Bridgeport, 'cause it's where I'm spending a lot of my free time trout bumming it these days. And, last Saturday, we met again. A few more small wrinkles around the eyes, a gray hair, here or there, but, other than that,

thankfully, nothing's changed. I was stoked to have the opportunity to fish with him and his lady friend.

As for language, the word for “fish” in Italian is “pesce” and the word for “peach” is “pesca.” I don't intend to bore you to death with the rules of correct singular-plural transformation of nouns within the Italian language, but, from what I remembered, somewhat incorrectly be it, when you want to change a feminine noun from singular to plural, you change the last letter from an “a” to “e.” That's the case for most nouns, at least, of which “fish” doesn't fall into the same category. It's been a while since I was completely engulfed in the rather musical language. There was a time back in my early 20's when I spoke perfect Italian. I read the language. I dreamed the language. I made love with the language. I cursed in the language. It flowed off my tongue as easily as English. I knew it better

than Dante. However, somewhere along the lines of the last two decades, I forgot the plural form for the word “fish” and, I kept telling Francesca that there are very large “peaches” in the East Walker River, some of these “peaches” weighing in at ten-plus pounds. She corrected me every time. She is Swiss, mind you. Perfection, and nothing but. For those of you who have been to S-Land, you know that during October, under every deciduous tree throughout the land, are two Swiss, each with rake in hand, ready to battle to death to have the opportunity to pick up the first fallen leaf. As for tongue, I simply resorted to the fact that my Italian isn't as golden as it used to be; and, with a few Midge Patterns, large and small, Prince Nymphs, and Caddis Pupa Patterns, we pulled a few “trota” (the Italian word for “trout”) from the

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