



Crew and charter customers aboard the F/V Shake N' Bake pose with tuna caught Aug. 4 off the Washington coast. "The last two years it was kind of slow. We're just hoping it keeps up, there seems to be a lot of fish all over," said Shake N' Bake skipper Darrell Miller, on left.

LUKE WHITTAKER

By **LUKE WHITTAKER**
Coast River Business Journal

ILWACO — It's time to "turn and burn" for tuna fishermen along the coast.

The first significant albacore tuna landings of the season arrived at local ports at the start of August, spurred by reports of big schools of aggressive fish relatively close to shore. Commercial and recreational charter fishermen reported schools roughly 30 miles offshore, well within reach of the local fleet.

"[Aug. 3] was the busiest day I've seen in years, everybody was fishing. Lots of boats had the best days of their lives," said Shake N' Bake owner Mike Colbach.

Among the astounding catches was Sea Breeze Charters, who hauled in 65 tuna aboard the F/V Sea Breeze with skipper JP Pearson

'TURN AND BURN'

CHARTERS, COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN TARGET MIGRATING TUNA

and crew Cole Stillman and Dakota Hysmith.

'Best fishing I've seen this decade'

The recent surge in tuna success combined with a strong salmon season has created a perfect storm for fishermen along the coast.

"It's probably the best fishing I've seen this decade, for both salmon and tuna both being really good at the same time. Every salmon trip we've run we've been back before 1 p.m., and here we are back at the dock with 40 tuna by

2 p.m. — we haven't done that since 2019," Colbach said.

Colbach said they've been encountering schools of actively feeding albacore while trolling about 30 to 35 miles offshore.

"They're not very far, an hour and half run. And with \$6 per gallon diesel, it's nice they're close to shore," he said.

A lack of live anchovies has meant using more artificial lures, including jigs, and experimenting with live bait more commonly used for salmon.

"The last few days we've been using her-ring, which worked really, really well, which we've never fished before. But the last few days it hasn't worked after 9:30 a.m.," Colbach said.

"They get full, then they bite the jigs and iron," he said.

Time to 'turn and burn'

Albacore tuna fishing is notoriously unpredictable from year to year, where everything from ocean conditions to fish location can make the fishery a bonanza or bust.

August has historically been the month with the heaviest commercial tuna landings for Oregon and Washington state, with the season wrapping up around October,

See Page 5