

THE DEEPEST DIVE

Explorer recounts making the deepest ocean dive in history

By **NEKESA MUMBI MOODY**
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Taking the hours-long journey to what is believed to be the deepest point mankind has visited in any ocean was a complicated one, and for Victor Vescovo, it meant being constantly on the alert as he monitored his state-of-the-art vessel.

But when he reached 10,928 meters into the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench of the Pacific Ocean, Vescovo took the advice of the man whose record he just broke — Oscar-winning director James Cameron — and took 15 uninterrupted minutes to take in the view and the enormity of the moment.

Cameron told him he'd be busy, of course, but noted that "few if any people have seen what you've seen" so "deeply appreciate how fortunate you are to see it," Vescovo recalled in an interview.

Last month's groundbreaking mission was filmed as part of an upcoming Discovery Channel documentary series that will chronicle Vescovo's trips to the furthest parts of the world's waters — the Atlantic Ocean, the Southern Ocean, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Arctic Ocean. He has done all except the Arctic plunge, which is set for the fall.

The entire journey took nearly 12 hours — four hours



In this photo provided by Atlantic Productions for Discovery Channel, Victor Vescovo emerges from his submersible "Limiting Factor" after a successful dive to the deepest known point in the Mariana Trench on April 28, 2019. Vescovo, a businessman and amateur pilot, has also traversed the highest peaks of mountains, including Mount Everest.

Atlantic Productions Photo/Tamara Stubbs, File

to descend, four hours spent at the bottom, and then about four hours to ascend again. Vescovo, a businessman and amateur pilot who has also traversed the highest mountain peaks, including Mount Everest, said the goal of the expedition was not to best Cameron's mark in the ocean, but to go to areas of the waters that were unexplored.

"I was stunned to discover when I did my research that of the five oceans, four had never had a visitation to their bottoms," he said. "I thought it was about time that someone actually did that."

For his journey, Vescovo traveled in a vessel called the SDV Limiting Factor, a titanium craft that is billed as the "ultimate submersible" and the only

one able to travel to such depths. It was outfitted with high definition cameras that documented everything, including creatures unknown to man.

"There've been numerous new species thought found on this expedition. The scientific group is thrilled with the things that have been brought back for additional analysis. It's really great," he said.

He saw a very unusual jellyfish in the Indian Ocean but there was also an unsettling find — trash, particularly plastic, in the deepest part of the water.

The discovery of plastic in such far reaches proves the need for more vigilance to protect the oceans, said Andy Sharpless, CEO of Oceana, which describes itself as the largest worldwide group in the world with the goal of saving the oceans.

"Vescovo's discovery of plastic in the deepest part of the ocean is disturbing but not surprising because plastic is found throughout the water column in our oceans," he said in a statement. "That's why it can't be easily 'cleaned up.' We need to focus on reducing the use and production of plastic in order to really protect our seas from plastic."

Patrick Lahey of Triton Submarines, which made the vessel that transported Vescovo and also followed Vescovo's dives to the Challenger Deep, said the missions show why more exploration of the oceans are critical for science's benefit.

"These are large swaths of the oceans that we've never seen that really we know virtually nothing about. I think it's important for us as human beings to study these areas," said Lahey.

"The ocean is the life force of our planet. I think this is a great opportunity for us to learn more about it and to try to use this tool that we've developed for that purpose."

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AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

Zucchini or summer squash makes for a colorful pasta dish

A combination of pasta and summer squash results in a light, flavorful dish that's full of color.

We decided against peeling the squash, as the skin helped to keep the pieces intact throughout the cooking process. Because summer squash contains so much liquid, we salted and drained it to keep our sauce from ending up watery and bland.

The salted squash also browned beautifully; just 5 minutes in a hot skillet gave a light char to each batch. To accompany the squash, we chose halved grape tomatoes, fresh basil, and pine nuts.

We finished the sauce with balsamic vinegar to give it a kick and paired the sauce with farfalle, since its nooks and crannies easily trapped the flavor-packed ingredients. A combination of zucchini and summer squash makes for a more colorful dish, but either may be used exclusively if desired. Cherry tomatoes can be substituted for the grape tomatoes.

If farfalle is unavailable, campanelle and fusilli are good substitutes. We prefer using kosher salt because residual grains can be easily wiped away from the squash; if using table salt, be sure to reduce all of the salt amounts in the recipe by half.

FARFALLE WITH ZUCCHINI, TOMATOES & PINE NUTS

Servings: 6

Start to finish: 1 hour

2 pounds zucchini and/or summer squash, halved lengthwise and sliced 1/2 inch thick

Kosher salt and pepper

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

3 garlic cloves, minced

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 pound farfalle

12 ounces grape tomatoes, halved

½ cup chopped fresh basil

¼ cup pine nuts, toasted

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Grated Parmesan cheese

Toss squash with 1 tablespoon salt and let drain in colander for 30 minutes. Pat squash dry with paper towels and carefully wipe away any residual salt.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over high heat until just smoking. Add half of squash and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown and slightly charred, 5 to 7 minutes, reducing heat if skillet begins to scorch; transfer to large plate. Repeat with 1 tablespoon oil and remaining squash; transfer to plate.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in now-empty skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add garlic and pepper flakes and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in squash and cook until heated through, about 30 seconds.

Meanwhile, bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve ½ cup cooking water, then drain pasta and return it to pot. Add squash mixture, tomatoes, basil, pine nuts, vinegar, and remaining 2 tablespoons oil and toss to com-



AP Photo/Daniel J. van Ackere

This undated photo provided by America's Test Kitchen in May 2019 shows Farfalle with Zucchini, Tomatoes and Pine Nuts in Brookline, Mass. This recipe appears in "The Complete Mediterranean Cookbook."

bine. Season with salt and pepper to taste and adjust consistency with reserved cooking water as needed. Serve with Parmesan.

Nutrition information per serving: 463 calories; 154 calories from fat; 17 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 177 mg sodium; 65 g carbohydrate; 5 g fiber; 9 g sugar; 13 g protein.