

New Bedford Chowder Festival 2012



By Shonna
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Without a doubt, New Bedford has come to host some awesome annual festivals. Whether it's the thousands of people cramming into Madeira Field for the Feast, dozens of bands taking the stage all weekend at Summerfest or locals providing demonstrations of the fishing industry at the Working Waterfront Festival; New Bedford can pride itself on being rich with varied cultural experiences.

However, even as we watch the final weekends of summer dwindle away, there is still much to look forward to for the fall.

One fall festivity that has become incredibly successful and is a must-attend community event of the year is the annual New Bedford Seaport Chowder Festival. Taking place on Sunday October 7th, the Chowder Festival tends to pack Custom House Square in downtown New Bedford and provides participants with tantalizing tastes from 25 regional restaurants.

If the idea of taste testing dozens of seafood chowder, kale soup, quahog and clam chowder samples sounds like something you'd enjoy, here's the 101 on the New Bedford Seaport Chowder Festival:

1. When, Where and Costs



Custom House Square – Photo by Sally Spooner.

As always, the Chowder Festival takes place under a large tent covering Custom House Square in downtown New Bedford. The tent allows for the event to resume come rain or shine. This year the Festival will be on Sunday October 7th, which is the day before Columbus Day. The combination of a three day weekend and cool early fall time weather should allow for people to be able to enjoy themselves all day long.

The festival starts at noon and ends at 5 PM. Tickets for this event tend to sell fast, and the tent is often very crowded so buying tickets in advance or getting there early is recommended. Tickets bought in advance are \$15 and can be purchased at the Downtown New Bedford Office which is located at 105 William Street on the second floor. Also, tickets can be bought on their website; www.downtownnb.org or at other participating locations which will be announced soon. Tickets bought at the door are \$18 and children ages 6-12 are only \$5. Children 5 and under are free.

2. Chowder Show Down



Winner trophies and plaques
– photo by Sally Spooner.

For those of you who have never been, the Chowder Festival is a competition between the twenty-five participating restaurants. Over the past six years, local eateries have faced off to win 1st, 2nd or 3rd place in either the People's Choice Award or the Judge's Choice Award in five categories.

The categories are; best clam chowder, seafood chowder, kale soup, stuffed quahog and table presentation.

As with any similar food festival, participants are given a voting card to fill out once they have sampled to their heart's delight. The votes are submitted (usually at the center of the tent) and tallied later to determine the winner. The Judge's Choice award is determined by a blind taste test, which eliminates the issue of favoritism.

Since 2006 the New Bedford Seaport Chowder Festival has amassed an impressive Hall of Fame of past winners. Last year's coveted Best Clam Chowder People's Choice Award went to Bittersweet Farm. Freestone's pulled off Best Seafood Chowder according to the people, River's End Cafe was elected Best Stuffed Quahog, and Best Table Display went to Marlees Seafood. Interestingly enough, the People's Choice Award for Best Kale Soup went to none other than St. Luke's Hospital, which also placed second in two other categories... now that's some good hospital food!

For a full list of Hall of Famers in for both People's Choice and Judge's Award since 2006, [click here](#).

3. Food & Drink



Photo by Sally Spooner.

As previously mentioned there are 25 booths that will be participating in this year's New Bedford Seaport Chowder Festival. The booths are set up in a circle around the perimeter of the tent so that traffic can flow from one station to the next. So far, announced participants include; Braza Rotisserie, Cedars Assisted Living, Cotali Mar Restaurant, Emeritus at Dartmouth Village; Freestone's City Grill, Inner Bay Cafe & Grille, Lafrance Hospitality, M & C Cafe, Madeira Cafe, Me & Ed's, Mike's Restaurant, The Pasta House, River's End Cafe, The Sail Loft; Southcoast Hospitals Group, Seaport Inn & Marina; St. Michael's Restaurant, Vivvy's and Whaling City Diner. Some of these eateries are new to the festival, while others have been competing every year from the very start.

For those who aren't big on seafood, Cafe Arpeggio will be selling coffee, homemade ice cream and sandwiches. There will also be drink vending available outside of the tent which features local beers and wines as well as soda and mixed drinks. All food and drink items besides the samples are not included in the ticket price.

4. Entertainment

The Chowder Festival can get very crowded, but it is also dedicated to family fun for those with young children. The YMCA Lobster Races are always a big draw for children, and there will also be craft activities organized by the New Bedford Ocean Explorium and Global Charter School.

This year's musical entertainment will be provided by a very talented Eagles tribute band called Another Tequila Sunrise.

Another Tequila Sunrise is considered to be one of the premiere Eagles cover bands in the nation and have been touring the country for over ten years. In addition to this band bringing an exciting musical experience, Another Tequila Sunrise also features Keith Brindle who is a New Bedford native.

Photos from the 2011 New Bedford Chowder Festival – Provided by Sally Spooner

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