8th Annual New Bedford Seaport Chowder Festival; 25 Local Eateries, Lobster Races, Craig DeMelo



8th Annual New Bedford Seaport Chowder Festival: Sunday, October 13 at Pier 3



By Shonna McGrail Ryan

It’s sad to say, but we can feel summer slipping away as schools reopen and the air cools off. Yet, 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 13th, the Chowder Festival always draws a big crowd eager to try samples from 25 local eateries. This year it will take place at Pier 3 of New Bedford’s Historic Working Waterfront.

If the idea of taste testing dozens of seafood chowder, kale soup, stuffed 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

For the first time the Chowder Festival will take place at Pier 3 on the waterfront. As always, it will be hosted under a massive tent which will allow for the event to resume come rain or shine. This year the Festival will be on Sunday October 13th, which is the day before Columbus Day. The combination of a three day weekend and cool early fall time weather should allow people 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 are $15 in advance, $18 day of, $5 for children 6-12, free for 5 and younger.

2. Chowder Showdown

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. This year a new category has also been added; signature soup.

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. New judge this year is "2012 Chopped Champion" Chef Joe Rego. Returning Judges

are Michael Rock, Henry Bousquet and Devon Byrnes.

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 The Pasta House. Freestone's earned Best Seafood Chowder according to the people, Southcoast Hospitals Group was elected Best Stuffed Quahog, and Best Kale Soup went to The Madeira Cafe.

3. Food & Drink

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, participants are still being announced.

Autumn Glen at Dartmouth
Brandon Woods
Cafe Mimo
Cedars Assisted Living
Cotali Mar Restaurante
Cork Wine & Tapas
Emeritus Senior Living
Fish House
Freestone's City Grill
Maderia Cafe
Mike's Restaurant
Olive Garden Restaurant
Pa Raffa's Italian Restaurant
Pub 6
Rose Alley Ale House
Russell Morin Fine Catering
Seaport Inn Grill
Ten Cousins Brick Oven
Tia Maria European Cafe

Urban Grille

For those with a sweet tooth, Cafe Arpeggio will be selling coffee, homemade ice cream and desserts as well as an assortment of 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. Most up-to-date info: http://www.downtownnb.org/chowderfest.html.

4. Entertainment

The Chowder Festival can get quite 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 the Craig DeMelo Band, which is a local favorite. Craig DeMelo is an artist with a varied and eclectic sound that can range from ballads to rock. He has been playing nationally since 2008 and has opened for such bands as Howie Day, Hootie and the Blowfish, Matchbox 20, The Mighty Mighty Bosstones and Less Than Jake.

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