

Who Remembers ... the New Bedford Scallop Festival?

Here is another installment in our *Who Remembers?* series. You can browse previous articles by using the search bar on the right or by clicking **here**. These articles are strolls down memory lane. In some cases, the buildings, but new businesses have replaced them. In other instances, the buildings or even the properties have been razed. Instead of a building, it may be a TV show, personality, or commercial that no one longer exists. Either way, it can't stop us from taking the Memory Lane stroll!

As always we would rather this be a discussion. No one knows this area better than those who grew up here! Please, leave constructive criticism, feedback, and corrections. We'd love to hear your anecdotes. Please share!

In a typical year of fishing for Atlantic sea scallops, around 55 million pounds are harvested at a value of approximately \$570 million. Massachusetts is the state where more scallops are brought to port than anywhere else in the country and the city of New Bedford is responsible for a lion's share of this annual scallop harvesting: we have been the nation's most valuable port for 20 years straight with scallops comprising about 80% of the seafood we caught. We're not only darn good at scalloping, but we've been doing it since 1883.



Yazan Elayan photo

While the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has reported that scallops are not currently overharvested and New Bedford's fishermen are more than eager to head out to sea and meet the demands of hungry seafood lovers, the New England Fishery Management Council said that there will be a

significant drop in this year's catch, to a predicted 40 million pounds. This likely means an increase from the average current price of \$20 per pound, but that also depends on how much scallops are brought to market from foreign markets.

We obviously love scallops! Wrapped in bacon, seared lemon-garlic butter, fried scallops, scallop roll, broiled, stuffed scallops, in a casserole, paella, or stew, or as part of a surf 'n turf, you name it, our love affair with the bivalve. Believe it or not, what we call a "scallop" is actually the adductor muscle of a saltwater clam that is responsible for closing the clam's shell. The muscle only makes up about 30% of the clam and the rest is the stomach, digestive glands, eyes, intestines, a "foot," heart, tentacles (yes, tentacles), gonads (yes, gonads!), gills, ovary or roe, etc. A strange creature that belies its tastiness!

Now that we've satisfied Joe Friday's requirements about our beloved scallop, let's have some foodie talk. We are the world's highest-grossing seafood ports and the majority of that seafood is scallops, thereby producing revenue for the city and plenty of jobs, why the heck do we not have a Scallop festival?!



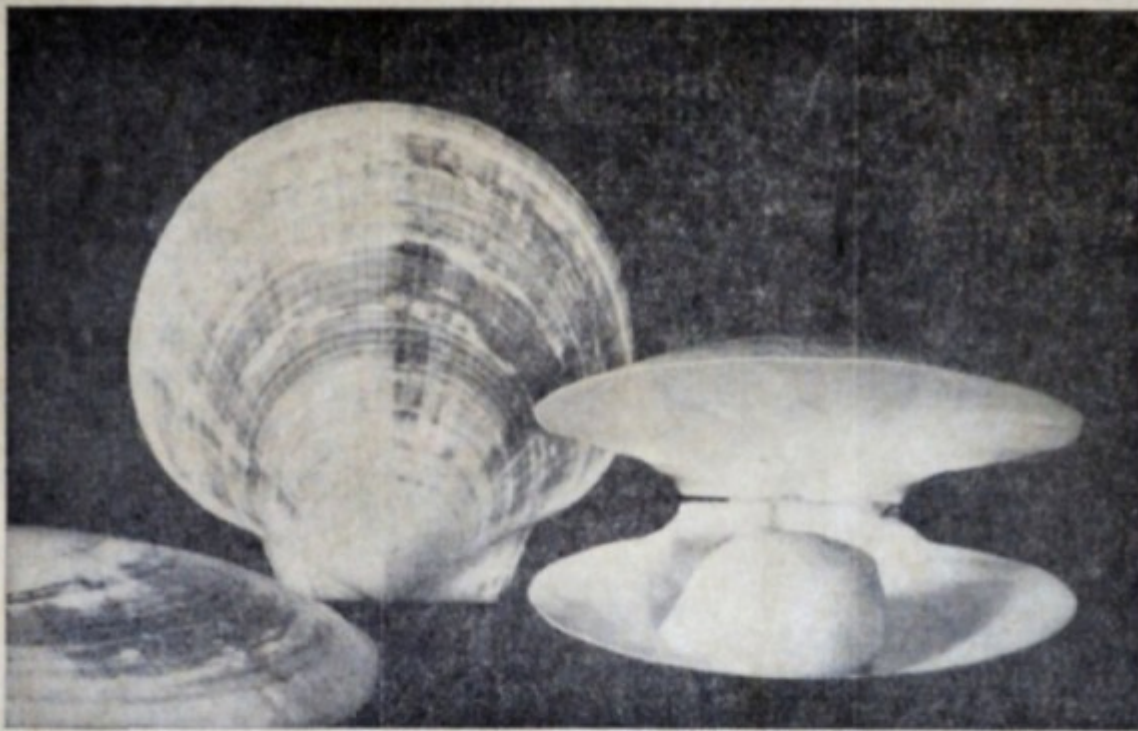
The insides of the saltwater clam showing the proportion of the adductor muscle or “scallop” compared to the entire clam.

We have a Seaport Chowder Festival (which does feature scallop shucking) Folk Festival, Jazz Festival, two Portuguese “Feasts”, and until recently a Whaling City Festival and Working Waterfront Festival. These festivals characterize everything that is quintessentially New Bedford. No scallop festival seems to be a glaring oversight and an obvious event that would generate revenue for the city as well as please tens of thousands of people.

An obvious idea is obvious, you say? Well, this is not a new idea, but instead, an old idea: New Bedford had its first Scallop Festival in 1958!

The festival was the brainchild of the New Bedford Exchange Club and the New Bedford Seafood Co-Op who wanted to promote the idea of scallops being tasty, fat-free, boneless, and

nutritious and help boost profits in the novel industry. Incredibly, not many people were familiar with scallops being on the dinner plate and the two groups felt that a festival where locals could have a taste would be a great way to introduce locals to the idea. The dish they tried to promote? Nope, not scallops wrapped in bacon, but “Curried Scallop Kebabs.” Say what?



PEARL OF THE ATLANTIC

Of the Atlantic Ocean scallop it can truly be said, "Here is the perfect gem of seafood."

Scallops grow plump, sweet and flavorsome in the coldwater beds of Georges Bank where New Bedford fishermen, proud of a long tradition of harvesting quality seafoods, sustain the ocean freshness of each catch with tender, loving care.

August is SCALLOP FESTIVAL month . . . a time when tribute is paid to this succulent shellfish in New Bedford, Mass. If you can't join us in this festive event, have one of your own . . . back-yard style . . . along with other scallop lovers throughout the land. *New Bedford Seafood Council.*

CURRIED SCALLOP KABOBS

Thread scallops on skewers (or use foil lined broiler pan). Brush scallops generously with the following, well-mixed: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup prepared mustard; 2 teaspoons curry powder and 1 teaspoon lemon juice. Broil, turning frequently, 5 to 8 minutes, or until nicely browned.



6TH ANNUAL SCALLOP FESTIVAL • NEW BEDFORD, MASS. • AUG. 9, 10, 11



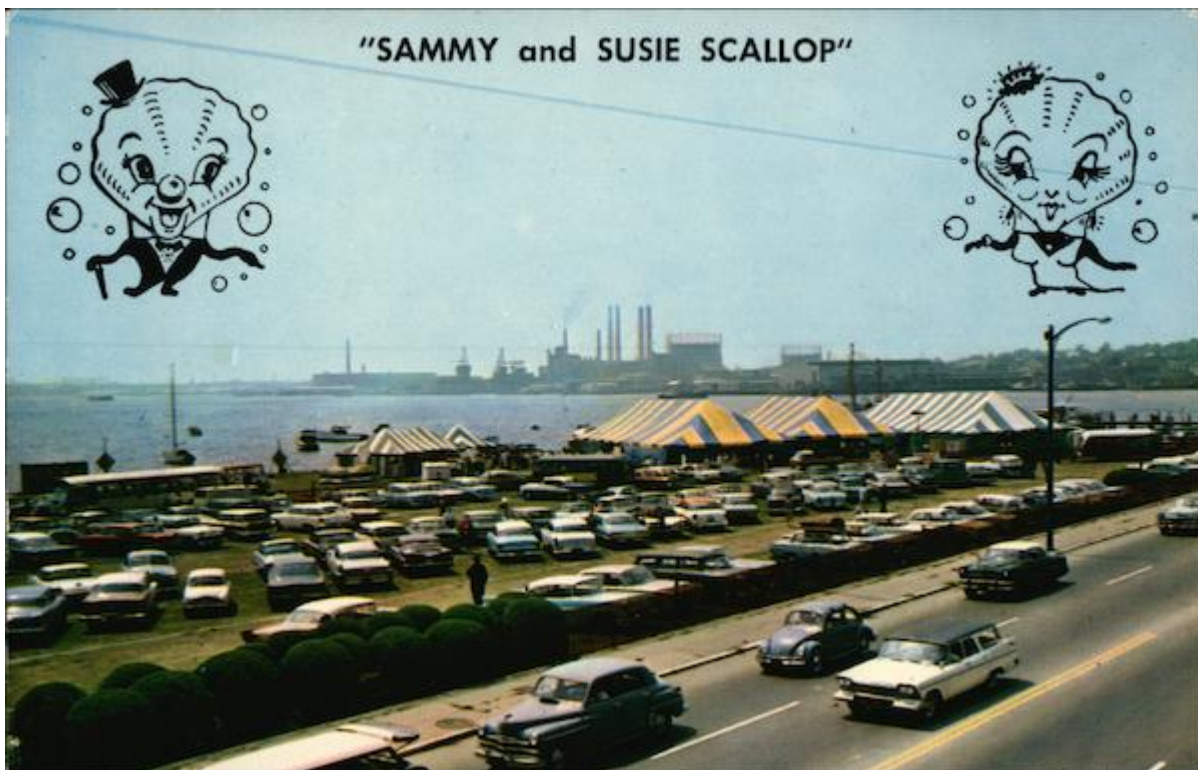
Poster advertising "Curried Scallop Kebabs" during the New Bedford Scallop Festival.

Each August, organizers would pitch tents at Pope's Island for 3 days, and with the help of mascots "Sammy the Scallop" and

"Susie Scallop" they would promote the festival which brought in people from the South Coast, Boston, Providence, and Cape Cod and beyond. They would flock to the annual event to gobble up the "Pearl of the Atlantic" in as many ways as chefs could create.

The price for a pound of scallops at that first festival? 60 cents during the winter and half that in the summer, prices which likely reflected the supply – more scallops available, the lower the cost for the consumer, and more boats harvesting in the summer meant driving down prices.

Each year, for a decade, the New Bedford Scallop Festival grew until it hit a snag in the market price: in 1968 there was a decline in landings of scallops while there was simultaneously an increase in yellowtail flounder landings. Organizers switched gears and redubbed the festival to the New Bedford Seafood Festival and alas the scallop festival was no more.



Postcard featuring two of the festivals mascots, "Sammie and "Susie."

But here we sit more than 50 years later in a much different seafood market. There's no need to convince people that

scallops are tasty or that we should curry kebab them. Oh, we know scallops intimately now. How about we bring back the New Bedford Scallop Festival, the 11th Annual New Bedford Scallop Festival to be exact.

Can you imagine the aroma of scallops, bacon, garlic, and butter being cooked, wafting through the air? We could have live music, food trucks and stands, a shucking contest, a seafood market, and awards for the best dishes. All the area seafood companies could supply the festival with seafood, and feature their products and employees, while the restaurants can offer signature scallop dishes right from their menu.

Once again we would draw a crowd from the region and beyond, bringing in revenue and a boost to local businesses as visitors explored the rest of the city, enjoying and exploring all the New Bedford has to offer. How about it New Bedford?



Live scallop in its natural habitat.

Appointment - Tues. Apr 13:45



NEW BEDFORD Sea SCALLOP FESTIVAL

SPONSORED BY THE EXCHANGE CLUB OF NEW BEDFORD
WITH COOPERATION OF NEW BEDFORD SEAFOOD COUNCIL

P. O. Box 469 - New Bedford, Massachusetts

Senator John F. Kennedy
Senate Office Bldg.,
Washington D. C.

6 April 1959

Dear Senator Kennedy

Because of your continuing interest in the fishing industry of Massachusetts the Scallop Festival Committee of New Bedford enlists your support and endorsement. The purpose of this event which will hold for the second year on August 7 & 8 is to project and advertise the city of New Bedford and more particularly New Bedford Scallops. Last year we fed 8,300 complete scallop dinners in 2 days and hope to accommodate twice that number this year. Our effort attracted much attention from the nation's food editors and stories and recipes appeared in many national publications as an end-product of the Festival. We of the Exchange Club are most anxious to promote our fishing fleet in the hopes that this industry will do much to enhance the economic climate of the Commonwealth.

For the second year I am acting as Co-Chairman of the Festival and as a part of another service club activity for the New Bedford Jaycees I have been awarded an expense paid trip to Washington this coming week (please see news clipping). I am arriving in Washington Monday night (April 13) with the hopes of attending the TASE-EMER dedication ceremonies the following day. I am flying to Washington with Hal Neilson, staff photographer, New Bedford Standard-Times. I would greatly appreciate it if you would consent to be photographed holding a "blown up" invitation to the Scallop Festival from the people of New Bedford. I am sure such a shot would give our community project a much needed national flavor and would help enhance the fishing industry here. If this request is feasible we would appreciate it if such a meeting might be arranged before Mr. Neilson departs for New Bedford (5PM Tuesday 14 April). I wish to impress that this is not a commercial venture- but a community attempt to promote one of its native industries.

If you favorably consider my request, I would appreciate a call from your administrative assistant at my business phone (WYman 9-8295-Lincoln Pharmacy), collect of course. Thanking you in advance for your continued interest in New Bedford, I remain



Charles E. Sharek Jr.
Charles E. Sharek Jr., Co-Chairman
Scallop Festival Committee



Yazan Elayan photo



Yazan Elayan photo

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Do you recall when the New Bedford Scallop Festival was up and running? Remember the mascots "Sammie and Susie"? Would like

to see it return? Let us know in the comment section or email us at info@newbedfordguide.com.