



South Boston Online

7th Annual Boston Seafood Festival Returns to Fish Pier

By Richard Campbell



The Boston Fisheries summer event went off well to an enthusiastic crowd, despite looking a little long in the tooth, it still represents a family fun annual event. With seafood vendors and chefs promoting various ways to prepare and consume their product, some mild entertainments, fresh seafood meals from a variety of sources, the core of the festival is pretty good. But there is no question: the event's down-home nature needs an aesthetic brush up.

The festival is about good seafood, and that it has in spades. The food demonstrations, along with accommodating vendors, were up to the usual high standards, once you got through the lines. You want to selectively shop for the best lobster rolls. This year we found Captain Marden's Seafood Truck had the most reasonable rolls with fries. Harmon's Seafood from Portland Maine made delicious crab cakes with their own home made tangy tarter sauce. Local calamari kings, The Daily Catch, had their trademark calamari and

grilled shrimp, while Mike Padilla demonstrated preparing fish for cooking. The people from Essex Clam Bake had the most elaborate meal set up right on the pier looking out over the boats. Their boiled lobster plates were moving fast as people bibbed up to crack and rack the critters for their juicy meat.

For real spicy and original tastes, one has to have the patience to watch the full chef demonstrations to obtain the tidbits of their creations. Chef Charles Foster from Woodland Grill offered up some spicy recipes and tips for cutting Blue Fish, how to prepare a seafood brine and put together tasty spicy toppings. Basil Freddura, head chef from the Daily Catch, was there to demonstrate their Sicilian style seafood, as well as Brendon Burke from the exclusive French Bastille Kitchen in Fort



Point. The humble surroundings of the demonstration areas did not do justice to the style and quality of the food.

The Boston Fisheries Foundation people presented their traditional Seafood Festival T-shirts, and offered up a raffle, while out on the harbor there was the blessing of the fleet, Coast Guard and Boston Fire ship demonstrations. Nagle Seafood's Vinnie Nagle was back this year to support the festival, jovially promoting events. There



was a music barge this year, which was supposed to substitute for a real stage. With all the vessels around the Boston harbor that could have been used, this one didn't really inspire, but kept performers at a distance. However, that didn't stop Sonya Rae & The Ryan Taylor band, whose soulful treatment of popular songs was pretty on the spot.

Local sponsors, East Boston Savings Bank staff showed up to support the event, as did Massport, Harpoon, and the New England Regional Council of Carpenters. The Fishing Partnership organization that supports New England Fisherman's families with health insurance

and other services for 11,000 New England industry members was handing out bling and quizzing people on water safety. Marine biologists from Umass Dartmouth were busy promoting their programs, as Save the Harbor Save the Bay stamped out fish prints. Wayne Hayes Seafood of Hyannis provided oysters for fresh shelling, and he gave a shucking demonstration with his staff. The events are there in a rustic form, but not quite appealingly staged to move it from a mere eat fest to an enticing Festival.

First on the list of improvements is the plaza of this festival is a real roaster, that has little accommodations in terms of shade. This festival cries out for better umbrellas for the main area, a real sound stage, better wayfinding, and some cool down tents. The college dorm treatment with the double humiliation beer lines does not engender happy feelings. With a ticket price of \$15.00 (\$5.00 for



Kids) it's easy to drop \$75.00 to purchase of a seafood dinners, so the entertainment factor should be better orchestrated. It is understood that there are licensing restrictions and limitations on how festivals operate, but this event is a little stuck in a rut of its own creation.

This is a festival that supports a worthy cause, but it could be so much more if the organizers made a

few simple upgrades What would be so cool is if they moved the festival time back to include the evening, hung some lights and emulated the feasts in the North End a little. The



kid's aspect is sorely in need of an upgrade, especially if you want to educate future generations about the ocean. All that aside, if you've never been to this event, it's worth a stop-over. I recommend going later in the day and applying copious sun block, to avoid becoming a lobster yourself!