

# Seafood Festival Returns

By John Partin

The Morehead City waterfront creates special memories. A timeless venue, visitors of all ages both leave and return with memories untarnished by modern intrusion. A waterfront walk fills the senses with the sights, sounds and smells of a seaport. It is a place of the sea and changes only with the seasons. The grandest season is the fall, a time of fish migrations, bustling fishing vessels, the crisp, tart feel of the evenings and the irresistible aroma of cooking seafood from waterfront restaurants. The season and waterfront blend into a perfect setting for the North Carolina Seafood Festival.

The Seafood Festival, on the first weekend in October, is a celebration of this port town and the sea on the Morehead City waterfront. This year marks the 28th anniversary of this event, which is recognized as the largest festival east of Raleigh and winner of the 2010 Best Event in the Southeast. The sponsor is the NC Department of Agriculture—Seafood Division, and the festival is a perfect partner for the “got to be NC” promotions of the overall NC Department of Agriculture that champion the products grown, raised, caught and made in North Carolina. These promotions mirror the goal of the North Carolina Seafood Festival to promote the commercial fishing industry and the buying of American-caught seafood and American-grown produce.

The North Carolina Seafood Festival is a not-for-profit organization of Carteret County citizens and business people in conjunction with the town of Morehead City. It seeks to educate the public about seafood, promote the social and economic impact of the seafood industry, boost tourism and provide the opportunity for North Carolina non-profit civic, church and educational organizations to raise funds through festival participation. Since 1987, over \$1.8 million has been disbursed among participating Carteret County non-profit groups. In addition, festival leadership has established a scholarship fund for educational pursuits relative to the seafood industry.

The dates this year are October 3-5, and visitors will find themselves in a mammoth outdoor experience. The highlights naturally include an endless variety of seafood prepared in both traditional and unexpected dishes, street dances, concerts, arts and crafts, a popular flounder fling, an international-award-winning chefs’ tent, games, fireworks, Southern Outer Banks Boat Show, road race, sailing regatta, educational exhibits, hands-on programs for kids, rides and games.

And this year, SasSea, the “o-fish-al” mascot of the festival is saucy and sassy—and she’s sporting a sensational new look. SasSea was given a makeover to mirror the growth of the festival; look for her at the SasSea Island Playground. Find her also walking the grounds and at the Estée Lauder and Belk booth having her make-up fix. This booth also has some special things for visitors.

A popular Saturday and Sunday event is the flounder fling. Participants fling a flounder into a large frying pan—fun for all, but Miss North Carolina by tradition gets the first fling every year. Her good luck kiss to the first flounder will surely be a winner.

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“Learn it, Taste it, Love it” is the theme of “Cooking with the Chefs” that promises a NC seafood experience. This free event begins Saturday at 10 a.m., when chefs from premier seafood restaurants have center stage each hour to prepare an exquisite seafood dish that will surprise and delight the guests. Fifty lucky guests will be seated each hour to sample the culinary specialties. Sunday will highlight a chefs’ competition featuring two chefs each hour cooking a secret seafood dish and each receiving a score. The two highest scoring chefs of the day will compete in a final competition in the afternoon. Details on all chefs, recipes and catch groups may be viewed on the festival website.

Recognized name entertainers perform on three different-themed stages beginning Friday night and continuing until Sunday afternoon. The Coastal Stage features folk and “down east” music. The SasSea Stage offers programs to delight children and families. Saturday night, the U.S. Cellular Main Stage will crank up with Academy of Country Music Awards nominee Colt Ford. Colt Ford brings a new genre to country music and creates an instant sensation with country rap. This entertainer should not be missed, as his upbeat rolling style will rock the waterfront. Stephanie McIntyre, the executive director of the festival, states that the fans clamored for a national artist and is delighted to present Colt Ford. Clare Dunn will open for this main event and has debuted in style on the country music scene.

Capping off this evening entertainment will be a fireworks display from Sugarloaf Island, creating a spectacular sight reflecting off Bogue Sound. It promises to be the best fireworks display in North Carolina.

At the Blessing of the Fleet on Sunday, thanks is given for our state’s resource of seafood. The poignant ceremony pays tribute to those who bring seafood to the nation’s tables and to those watermen who have lost lives on the water making their living. The NC State Port hosts the ceremony, with participating boats gathered to honor the watermen and the sea.

Free parking for the festival is available on Saturday and Sunday at the NC State Port in Morehead City and includes a free shuttle to and from the festival. The port parking includes handicapped accessible spaces and a handicapped accessible shuttle. Other lots adjacent to the festival are operated by community groups with most charging a modest fee. Designated handicapped accessible spaces are also available on the north side of Arendell Street between 7th and 8th Streets and on the south side of Arendell between 8th and 9th Streets.

Detailed information is available at [ncseafoodfestival.org](http://ncseafoodfestival.org) or on Twitter at #NCSeafoodFest. Explore and plan a visit to this award-winning event: discover seafood, buy a souvenir, take a picture with SasSea and take home a memory. The North Carolina Seafood Festival—Where Seafood and Seafun Meet!

## September Sudoku

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4		2					1
7	8				6		2
5							9
		3			7		
2		1				4	
		6	4			9	
				8	5		6