

# SEIZE THE MAINE SHRIMP SEASON

Winter is when the local harvest takes place take time to enjoy your share of the bounty

By SARAH GRANT  
The York Independent

They are the size of a salad shrimp but their rich, meaty texture and flavor are much closer to that of their cousin, the Rock Shrimp.

It is winter, which means it is also Maine shrimp season.

Maine shrimp live only in the Gulf of Maine. They start their five-year lives as males and mature into females. Maine shrimp are a vital link in the food chain as consumers of plankton and sea-bed invertebrates and are in turn eaten by Hake, Cod and Mainer. Maine shrimp were overfished almost to the point of extinction in the 1950s and '60s, but now—thanks to brief, well-controlled shrimping seasons—they have rallied back to moderate numbers.

Our sweet, delicately pink winter miracles are super easy to prepare and are packed with vitamin B12 and niacin. Shrimp are also a good source of vitamin D and trace minerals. They are a fabulous source of low fat protein and are not treated with preservative like the big boys from Thailand. For this reason, Maine shrimp have a very short shelf life. Buy them the same day you plan to eat them, or at least cook them the same day. Keep them on ice at all times until the moment they hit the cooking heat.

I have found our native petite crustacean, all headless and cleaned for no less than \$6.99/lb, but if you don't mind dealing with the shells, you can usually buy them for a modest \$.99/lb at Taylors Lobster Company at 32 Route 236 in Kittery, 439-1350. It's a good idea to call ahead;

shop stock fluctuates with winter storms and demand.

The shells and heads are loaded with flavor, so don't throw them away after you shuck the little darlings, instead use the recipe below for a flavorful shrimp broth you can store in the fridge for two days or freeze for up to three months.

In the meantime, the naked, headless shrimp cook up quickly by plunging them into boiling water for no more than a minute. When cooled, add them to your favorite salsa or top a green salad with shrimp. Mix them with a bit of mayo, a little finely chopped

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celery, a squeeze of lime and a touch of fresh dill for the best shrimp salad.

Make a succulent scampi by melting a knob of butter in sauté pan with a tablespoon or so of olive oil. Make a paste of a mashed clove of garlic, or two, chopped with a half teaspoon of sea salt then toss with a pound of raw shrimp just before they go into the heated pan. The garlic/salt mixture causes the shrimp to release their own luscious liquor to combine with the other flavors. Turn off the heat and stir a couple of times. Let the scampi rest in the pan for a couple of minutes. This dish will be ready in a flash, literally, so why wait for pasta to boil? Grab a good baguette,



COURTESY PHOTO

Winter is shrimp season in Maine, the very best time to enjoy fresh local shrimp.

tear off a piece and slather it with the unctuous shrimp stuff. What could be better for an impromptu appetizer with a chilled bottle of Pinot Grigio? Or, maybe it's supper with a green salad on the side.

## Shrimp Broth

Makes 4¼ to 5 cups

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Shells and heads from 1 pound of Maine shrimp
- 1 medium carrot, cut into 4 pieces
- 1 rib celery, cut into 4 pieces
- 1 small onion, cut into 4 pieces
- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ teaspoons tomato paste, preferably double-concentrate
- ½ cup dry white wine

- 5½ cups water
- 4 to 5 stems flat-leaf parsley
- ¼ teaspoon crumbled saffron threads (optional)
- ½ teaspoon whole black peppercorns

## Directions:

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the shrimp shells and heads, if using, and cook, stirring, for 3 to 4 minutes, until the shells become opaque.

Add the carrot, celery, onion, and bay leaf; cook, stirring frequently, for about 6 minutes, until the vegetables are fragrant and lightly golden.

Combine the tomato paste and wine in a liquid measuring cup, stirring to dissolve, then add to

the pot, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes, then add the water, parsley, saffron and peppercorns. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and cook uncovered for 30 minutes.

Remove from the heat and allow to steep for 15 minutes, then strain. Discard the solids. Let cool completely before storing.

Based on a recipe by Nancy Harmon Jenkins.

Sarah Grant, a local chef and organic farmer who has taught culinary arts at Le Cordon Bleu, writes about food for the York Independent. Send your local food thoughts to editor@yorkindependent.net.

## Achieving perfection in breakfast and lunch

That's what Phil Hughes and Elizabeth Williams have done with the The Black Bean Café across the border in N.H.

By SARAH GRANT  
The York Independent

Phil Hughes has achieved the perfect breakfast and lunch spot. The Black Bean Café faces the old Salmon Falls Mills on the two-block Front Street business district of the quaint, bricked hamlet of Rollinsford, N.H., just over the bridge from lower Main Street, South Berwick. It's a short drive from York.

These are new digs for Hughes and his

wife/partner Elizabeth Williams. The business moved one block from its original, more rustic establishment of five years just last March. According to Hughes, his customers regarded the old location to be more of a bakery than an eatery, but that has changed entirely in the new place.

And it is no wonder. The sleek, clean lines of the deco-modern interior with its '60s revival color scheme and indirect lighting is very inviting and cozy. It's a smallish restaurant with a long counter where stool sitters

can witness all of the activities of the cooking line and chat with Phil while he tries to focus on his orders. The exposed brick wall across from the counter is adorned with local artists' work—a new artist exhibits works for sale each month.

The countertop is crowded with Hughes' baked goods. Hughes arrives at the Bean between 2 and 4 a.m. to begin baking each day and to finish in time for breakfast service starting at 7 a.m., when the restaurant opens. Wheat, white, cinnamon and Anadama are the bread choices for toast, sandwiches or to purchase by the high-crowned loaf.

While the breads are cooling, Hughes whips up his daily cookies, scones (ginger,

orange, blueberry or coconut-pecan-apricot) and the muffin of the day, usually based on bran with various fruit additions. All delicious, but the real stars in this category are the cakes and the brioche.

The cardamom cake is inlaid with two generous swirls of cinnamon, nuts and brown sugar. As heavy as those ribbons of heaven are, they do not overpower, but more enhance the delicate cardamom essence of the overall cake. Just delectable. I haven't tried the chocolate ripple cake, but it is just as appetizing to behold so I can't imagine that it falls much behind its cardamom sister.

The brioche is a work of art. Hughes makes

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the rich, buttery dough and flattens it out like a pie pastry to spread it with fruit fillings. Then rolls it up like a jelly roll and cuts it into three or four inch sections, places them cut side up in a tube pan and allows the whole thing to rise to tender perfection before baking.

"It's a small kitchen, so what I can do is limited but very fresh," says Hughes. The "limited" menu for breakfast and lunch actually offers huge variety of flavors and choice.

The breakfast menu includes all of the usual eggs any way, breakfast meats, hash browns and toast combos, as well as Slow Cooked Spiced Oatmeal; Cinnamon Swirl French Toast (read: home-baked cinnamon bread here); Yogurt with Homemade Granola, or Granola without the yogurt. No breakfast plate is over \$5, except the ginormous 3 Egg Scramble with your choice of three additions (spinach, mushrooms, tomatoes, onions, peppers, bacon and the like) served with toast and hash browns for \$6.95. There are always three interesting specials on the chalkboard for each breakfast and lunch.

The lunch side of the menu features a bounty of choices with plenty of complex flavors for vegetarians, vegans and omnivores alike. Consider the Curried Chicken Wrap with cucumber, lettuce and toasted pecans, or the Homemade Hummus Pita Pockets brimming with cucumber, carrots, red pepper, lettuce, sprouts and drizzled with a miso-citrus dressing.

The menu appeals to northern New England lunch preferences with a beautiful Italian sandwich on homemade baguette and a daily special pizza or calzone whose dough is made from scratch in the Café kitchen. Hughes uses local produce whenever it's available; for example the Black Bean Café Burger fashioned with local beef and served on an English muffin. All sandwiches are served with a choice of chips or daily salad in a price range between \$5.95 and \$7.50 (for local beef burger).

There aren't just sandwiches, though. The regular menu offers salads with all house-made dressings, and the chalkboard lists hot dishes and other items for every taste. The day I spoke to Phil Hughes, the last item on the board was Jumbo-Lumbo, Hughes' interpretation of Jambalaya with Andouille sausage, shrimp and appropriate vegetables in a spicy tomato base served with healthful brown rice and some of the scrumptious bread for \$3.95 (cup) or \$4.95 (lunch size bowl).

I have experienced how flexible the kitchen is when I ordered an omelet containing the items listed for the special vegetarian sandwich on the board. I received a perfectly folded French style omelet stuffed with roasted pepper, spinach, fresh basil and goat cheese (mmmmmm, goat cheese) and a thick

“The menu appeals to northern New England lunch preferences...”

toasted slice of that homemade wheat bread. Everything is served with smiles and pleasant conversation.

The Black Bean Café at 76 Front Street, Rollinsford, N.H. is open year round six days a week. The Café is open from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 7 a.m. to noon on Saturday and Sunday.

Almost forgot to mention the beverages. The Black Bean serves Carpe Diem coffee and White Heron Teas with typical variations on the coffee: espresso, cappuccino, latte and mochaccino. There are cooler beverages, too: Italian soda, iced tea, lemonade and iced coffee. So after breakfast, stop by again for lunch and then stop by for an afternoon pick-me-up of smooth, full-bodied Carpe Diem coffee and a generous slab of that divine Cardamom Cake.



SARAH GRANT PHOTO

The Black Bean Café of Rollinsford, N.H., run by Phil Hughes and Elizabeth Williams, is worth a visit across the border.

EAT HERE

## A weekly column about local food

By SARAH GRANT  
The York Independent

### Winter Farmers' Market

So, on Saturday, Dec. 19, I finally got over to the indoor winter farmer's market held at Wentworth Greenhouses just across the border in Rollinsford, N.H., and I was blown away by the enormity, diversity and stunning quality of the whole thing!

Housed in one of the largest greenhouses were so many of the very best farmer/artisanal vendors in the seacoast area. The biggest surprise was all the freshly harvested vegetables I found—organic no less—and other fresh products such as pasture raised, heritage breed meats; fabulous Silvery Moon cheeses from their contented, all grass-fed cows; maple syrup products; freshly caught seafood; raw milk and cream from grass-fed Jersey cows; goat cheeses and yogurts; teas and an endless list of goods and other consumables made with locally grown materials/ingredients. The prices are excellent because you are buying directly from the artisan.

Do yourself a favor while supporting our local farmers through the winter and mark your brand new 2010 calendar with all the dates of this spectacular market sponsored by Seacoast Eat Local. The next Wentworth Greenhouses market will be Saturday, Jan. 23 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. If you can't wait that long, take a little trip down Rt 101 to Exeter High School to catch the very next market on Saturday, Jan. 9, also from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Check out the complete list of vendors, fresh produce and other products, and get driving directions at [www.seacoasteatlocal.org/winterfarmersmarkets](http://www.seacoasteatlocal.org/winterfarmersmarkets). Or, set your tomtom for Exeter High School, 1 Blue Hawk Drive, Exeter, N.H. and Wentworth Greenhouses, 141 Rollins Rd, Rollinsford, N.H. on the respective dates. Get the market early for the best selection.

### Side dishes

• **Restaurant Bargain of the Month:** The \$1 menu at Warren's Lobster House, Route 1, Kittery, Maine, 439-1630. You must present a coupon found at [www.lobsterhouse.com](http://www.lobsterhouse.com). Purchase an unlimited salad bar at the regular price and order appetizers, entrées, and desserts for \$1 each.

• **Remember Maude Hutchins?** In 2004, it was a wonderful lobster take-out place behind Bragdon Real Estate on York Street in York Village. Now Maude Hutchins is back with a twist! With 48 hours notice, owner Kent Kilgore and his staff will prepare your order of lobster bisque or stew, lobster pie, stuffed tails, lobster cakes or lobster Newberg and deliver it to your door. Prices range from a modest \$5.95 to \$19.95. Call Kent at 363-6192



to order or for more details. By the way, Maude Hutchins was Kilgore's great grandma. Look for more on Maude Hutchins' history and future plans in the next issue of the Independent.

### • Stonewall through the Winter:

Want some new entertainment on these cold, dark winter days and evenings? How about dinner and a show at Stonewall Kitchen Cooking School? The mostly demonstration classes start up their 2010 season immediately with the first class, "Fireside Feast," a menu of epicurean style comfort food demoted by the cooking school staff on Saturday, Jan. 2 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for a \$35 fee. You'll see the live cooking demo, dine on the food and walk away with the recipes.

Upcoming classes that caught my eye include "Tasty Sensations" which amounts to four courses of some tantalizing and fun-to-make plates, such as winey and creamy artichoke spread, towering chopped salad, bacon-wrapped salmon with braised vegetables and griddled berry pound cake. The cost is \$50, but a bargain for a four course meal, plus the demo and recipes.

Mary Ann Kane-Nudd will teach a rare hands-on class on Italian cuisine Sunday, Jan. 17 from 3 to 5 p.m. The cost is \$75, and probably worth every penny for the hands-on instruction, and the fact that you will take home an Italian feast for six, as well as the recipes.

Find out more about the many winter classes held at Stonewall Kitchen, 2 Stonewall Lane, York by visiting [www.stonewallkitchen.com/cookingschool](http://www.stonewallkitchen.com/cookingschool) or by calling 351-2713, ext. 1034 (ask for Patty Roche).

• **Discovering York's 'Bennies' and more:** The other morning, my son and I stopped by St. Joe's Coffee (449 Route 1, York Corner, across from Hannaford Plaza). I was delighted to find an expanded menu of new and different breakfast sandwiches. I ordered an egg on an English with bacon and scallion cream cheese—very tasty. I also had a bite of crispy chicken on a biscuit with jalapeno cream cheese that my son ordered. It was simple, slightly crisp, and worked together even better than I had expected. We shared an order of irresistible "bennies," deep fried, light-as-a-feather dough bites, rolled in confectioners sugar and served with a little maple syrup for dunking. While we were eating at the window bar for perhaps 10 minutes, at least 25 more customers came in one or two at a time to pick up breakfast sandwiches and coffee. The service is speedy and efficient; each of those take-out customers was gone in a flash. St. Joe's Coffee is open every day from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oh, and the coffee's really good, too.