

Chasing Sea Scallops

Road tripping to what may be the home of the best scallops on the East Coast

Author: Bridget Shirvell | Published: Friday, March 27, 2015



Scallop lovers can buy Bomster scallops directly from the family that fishes from them at their store Stonington Seafood Harvesters Inc., in Stonington, Conn. Image: Jessie King.

In tiny Stonington Borough, Connecticut, at the spot where narrow streets give way to fishing docks and the smell of salt water becomes almost overwhelming, sits a tiny unobtrusive building. It's here that scallop lovers from up and down the east coast come to buy Bomster Scallops directly from the family that fishes for them.

If you're lucky you'll be here on a day when Joe, Bill Jr. or Mike Bomster are here. The three brothers learned to fish from their grandfather and took the business over from their father who specialized in scallops: Bomster scallops. The Bomster brothers regale visitors with fishing stories, explain the process of harvesting scallops, and will give you a lecture on the prospects of future for fishing generations.

Since, 1976, the brothers have harvested sea scallops in the North Atlantic, a family livelihood that began out of a father's necessity.



The two 95-foot fishing trawlers, Stonington Jo and Patty Jo spend 8 to 14 days at sea at a time. Image: Jessie King.

"A father with three sons, it was his way to get us all on the boat and working," Joe said of his dad.

During scallop season in the Atlantic, the brothers, and their crew spend 8 to 14 days out to sea at a time, onboard one of the family's two 95-foot fishing trawlers. When they return to the docks at Stonington it's with already packaged flash-frozen scallops. Now, flash frozen isn't something that normally comes to mind when you think gourmet scallops but Joe promises the process is natural and keeps the scallops tasting sweet and delicate.

"You won't find anything else like them," Joe said.



Scallops ready for purchase outside the family's seafood shop. Image: Jessie King.

Biting into a Bomster scallop tastes like the beach on a summer day. There's a subtle sweetness to the delicate but firm scallops. It's a taste the Bomsters work hard to achieve.

When the crew is out on the fishing trawlers, named the Stonington Jo and Patty Jo, they're working around the clock. When the scallops are harvested from the depths of the Atlantic they're immediately rinsed in seawater and then placed in metal lids that

that go into an industrial freezer that reaches 20 below within seconds, preserving the nutrients and taste of the scallops.

“You’ll never taste a fresher scallop,” Joe said.

Plenty of people agree.



Bill Bomster Jr. outside of the family’s seafood shop in Stonington, Conn. Image: Jessie King.

Chefs up and down the East Coast order the scallops directly from the Bomster family. Locals head to the fishing docks and that tiny building with the Stonington Seafood Harvesters sign, picking up the scallops from the store or from the honor system freezer, where customers can buy fish from a freezer at the storefront when no one is around by depositing cash in a money slot or paying by credit machine. And those that aren’t local but discovered the scallops via word of mouth, no website or Facebook page for this business, call to order them or order them from one of the few distributors including America’s Farmstand which does take orders via the website.

During the summer months, when the farmers market takes place right outside the family cooks the scallops up giving out samples while telling stories. Joe wants to pass the business on to his nephews, but worries, if they’ll be able to make a living, which he says, is becoming, harder and harder to do.

“When people tell me they love my scallops, that really keeps me going, though,” Joe said.

For those that wander down to Stonington and taste the scallops, that’s easily done.

Grilled Sea Scallops with Ginger-Lime Sauce, Recipe from Connecticut Food and Farm

Serves 2 (hungry people!)

1 lb Sea Scallops * 2 Tb Olive oil * 2 tsp. Sea salt * 2 tsp. Freshly ground pepper * 1 cup Ginger-Lime sauce * 2 Tbsp. Cilantro, chopped * Thin slices of lime



Grilled Sea Scallops with Ginger-Lime Sauce. Image Connecticut Food and Farm

Rinse scallops, pat dry and toss with olive oil; season with salt and pepper. Place scallops on a hot grill, direct-high. (We use a mesh grill basket to ensure that no scallops slip through the grill grates!) Cook, turning once until scallops are done (about 4-6 minutes). Transfer to a serving dish and top with Ginger-lime sauce. Garnish with chopped cilantro and lime slices.

Yields 1 cup (leftover sauce can star at dinner another night over veg!)

1/2 cup Clam juice * 1/2 cup White wine * 2 Tbsp. Lime juice * 2 Tbsp. green onion- minced * 2 Tbsp. Ginger – peeled and minced * 1/4 tsp. Lime zest – minced * 1/2 cup Heavy whipping cream * 4 Tbsp. Butter – unsalted, chilled

In a saucepan over medium high heat add clam juice, white wine, lime juice, green onion, and ginger. Reduce liquid by half. Add lime zest, cream and reduce to 3/4 cup. Turn down to low. Stirring, add the butter one tablespoon at a time until butter is incorporated.

Author: Bridget Shirvell

Bridget Shirvell is the Digital Editor of Long Island Pulse. Story idea or just want to say hello? Email bridget@lipulse.com or reach out on Twitter @breeshirvell.