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**HALIFAX**



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# Seafood Culture

By Melissa Goertzen

With over 13,300 kilometers of coastline, it's no wonder that Nova Scotia is known for its seafood. The province is one of the world's leading exporters of lobster and 90 countries receive fish products caught by local fishermen. Of course, not all seafood is shipped off. Menus at top restaurants feature bacon wrapped scallops, baked Atlantic salmon, creamy seafood chowder and fresh oysters resting in salty brine. Local cuisine celebrates the fruits of the sea and the Nova Scotians who put it on the table.



Fishing is woven into the history and culture of Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people that comprises Nova Scotia. Mi'kmaq fishermen have developed methods including weir fishing, spear fishing, and line and hook fishing, which have stood the test of time. It is not uncommon to find Haligonians on the boardwalk with a pole in hand, fishing for mackerel and herring.

The unique relationship between the province and the Atlantic Ocean is enhanced because most locals live within 20 kilometers of the coast. Fishing villages are accessible from major highways and provide opportunities to view equipment used to harvest seafood. One hidden gem is Fisherman's Cove. Located 20 minutes from downtown Halifax, "The Cove" operates a 200-year-old wharf used by local fishermen. The small-scale fishing businesses found in these areas establish rural economies that capture the spirit of the province.

Fresh seafood and artistic inspiration come together to create unique "dock-to-dish" culinary experiences in Halifax. Chefs draw on local ingredients and menus change depending on what is in season. Scallops are a favourite to pair with sweet and salty combinations and creative approaches abound. A dish that comes to mind is the seared scallops, bacon and arugula topped with popcorn that was served at Edna in past years.

Other restaurants capture the spirit of Nova Scotia by offering taste tours of different regions. The Press Gang and Oyster Bar provides diners with a "shuck and slurp" oyster experience that features daily selections of bivalves harvested across the province. The appearance and taste of each oyster differs based on the environment it was produced in.

Of course, a culinary tour of Halifax would be incomplete without lobster, the crown jewel of seafood culture. It is featured in chowder, stew, tempura, and gnocchi dishes, but for many, a simple, traditional lobster dinner is as good as it gets. The Five Fisherman is known for its lobster and drawn butter. The restaurant also has historic significance in the city; it once served as a morgue for victims of the Titanic and staff often tell stories of ghost sightings.

For travellers desiring a truly authentic experience, nothing compares to an East Coast seafood boil. Dig for clams at low tide, buy a lobster straight off a fishing boat and put it all together in a pot of water straight from the Atlantic. Taste the salt of the sea and the sweetness of shellfish while watching a sunset from the beach.



