A shrimp craze for a mighty cause
Festival Report: Beaufort Shrimp Festival

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The Beaufort Shrimp Festival is more than a good excuse to inhale some tasty seafood and enjoy the sights and sounds of downtown Beaufort. It’s also an opportunity to promote South Carolina wild-caught shrimp, support the local economy and raise money for various organizations.

Among the groups benefiting from this year’s festival are Main Street Beaufort, USA; the South Carolina Shrimpers Association; the Independence Fund; and the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.

WHY YOU SHOULD GO
Last year more than 10,000 people attended the shrimp festival. Organizers hope to lure an even larger crowd to this year’s events.

The 16th annual festival kicks off at 6:30 p.m. Friday with a free concert by local band Happy Gets Lucky followed by “CSI: NY” star Gary Sinise and his Lt. Dan Band at 8:30 p.m. in Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park.

Local restaurants will serve food, beer, wine and sodas, which can be purchased with $1 tickets.

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PARK FESTIVITIES will continue from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday with a variety of Lowcountry cuisine, live entertainment, action-packed competitions, children’s activities and an arts and craft market.

ADOPT A SHRIMP

If you go
When: 6-11:30 p.m.
Friday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday
Where: Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park, Beaufort

Cost: Free; $1 tickets to purchase food and drinks

Contact:
843-525-6644
Lt. Dan weekend EVENTS

Several events will be held Saturday to benefit the Independence Fund and the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.

- Beaufort Shrimp Festival 5K Run/Walk, also known as the Lt. Dan 5K, 8 a.m., downtown Beaufort
Guests of this year’s festival will once again get a chance to cheer on their favorite crustaceans. Sea Island Rotary Club will present its second annual Adopt A Shrimp Charity Shrimp Race at about 1 p.m. Saturday at the park.

Five thousand numbered rubber shrimp will be dropped into the Beaufort River and will float their way to the finish line. Shrimp can be adopted for $10 each. The owners of the first 10 shrimp to the finish line will win cash prizes ranging from $100 to $2,000. The 10 finalists also qualify for a $100,000 grand prize.

Proceeds will go to charities including Child Abuse Prevention Association, the Independence Fund and Beaufort Children's Charities.

To adopt shrimp, go to www.seaislandrotaryshrimprace.com or pick up a form at Lowcountry National Bank, Wachovia Bank, Bundy Appraisal & Management, Beaufort Chiropractic or Levin Gilley & Fisher law offices.

**FOR THE MILITARY**

As part of this year’s festival, the Lt. Dan Weekend will feature several events Saturday to benefit the Independence Fund and the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund. Food and beverage proceeds will go to the nonprofit Main Street Beaufort, USA.

Participants may register for events ahead of time at www.active.com. Check-in and registration for all events will begin at 6:30 a.m. Guests are asked to leave coolers and pets at home both days. Strollers are not allowed in the park Saturday.

- The annual Beaufort Shrimp Festival 5K Run/Walk -- also known as the Lt. Dan 5K this year -- will begin at 8 a.m. on the corner of Bay and Newcastle streets in Beaufort. Cost is $20 by Friday or $25 the day of the race.
- The Popcorn Shrimp Run for children under 7 years old will begin at 8:45 a.m. Cost is $10.
- Lt. Dan Ride -- Wounded Warrior Bike Ride will begin at 8 a.m. at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. Cost is $30 by Friday or $35 the day of the race.
- The annual Walk Through History will begin at 8 a.m. on the corner of Bay and Newcastle streets. The leisure walk will take participants through the historic district. Go to www.active.com to register. Cost is $20.

**THE FLAVORS**

If shrimp isn’t your thing, have no fear. There will be plenty of delicious food to satisfy your appetite at this festival. Several local restaurants will serve food, which will include everything from shrimp cakes to hamburgers, hot dogs, funnel cakes and ice cream.

Guests will purchase $1 tickets to buy food and drinks. And they will get the chance to vote for their favorites Saturday when 16 local restaurants will compete for the title of "People's Choice Award."

**THE SHRIMP**

South Carolina Shrimpers Association President Craig Reaves said about 2,000 to 3,000 pounds of shrimp are consumed each year at the shrimp festival. He said the local wild-caught shrimp is healthier and tastier than the imported or pond-raised alternatives.

"About 85 to 90 percent of the shrimp consumed in the country is imported, and for the most part the public is unaware that they’re eating imported shrimp from China or Thailand," Reaves said. "But when you compare it side by side, there’s no comparison. Hands down, 10 out of 10 times you’ll pick the local wild-caught stuff over an imported shrimp."

Aside from that, Reaves said people should buy local shrimp to support the local economy. He said there are very few local shrimpers left -- probably less than 20 trawlers remain in Beaufort County.

"So we need the support of our local community," Reaves said. "And hopefully the local community wants to keep our history and heritage alive in Beaufort County and the state for that matter."

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