

# A Seafood Institution

*Arnold's Lobster and Clam Shack offers consistent quality in a casual setting to the hordes of sun-kissed travelers who frequent the four-decade-old restaurant.*

BY SCOTT LAJOIE

If there were a lobster shack in heaven, it might be called Arnold's.

Its mortal inspiration is located right on Route 6 in Eastham, and anyone visiting Cape Cod is compelled to stop in after or before a trip to the Seashore for its traditional fare. It's not a shack in the classic sense—located right on the water with weathered cedar shingles. But the atmosphere, the service, and most importantly, the quality seafood, are what make this a local institution.

It was originally a hot dog stand before becoming Gertrude's Beach Box, which was known for its clam cakes. Current owner Nate "Nick" Nickerson bought it from Gertrude herself back in



Fried seafood platter



Raw bar

## ARNOLD'S LOBSTER AND CLAM BAR

3580 Rte. 6,  
Eastham  
508-255-2575  
www.arnoldsrestaurant.com  
Entrée Range: \$7–  
Market price for  
lobster platters

the 1970s. Being a fan of *Happy Days* (it's named after the show's iconic malt shop), Nickerson employed rollerskating wait staff and offered drive-in order boxes. Soon, the novelty wore off and the restaurant took on a more traditional setup where patrons order at the counter and take their food back to large community tables. When Arnold's burnt down in 1993, Nickerson took the opportunity to build an even larger dining room, an outdoor area, and a shingled raw bar.

A majority of the staff has worked with Nickerson for years. They know how to produce large quantities of signature seafood quickly, consistently and with a smile. A line snakes out the door at peak times, but happy customers will attest that it moves fast (general manager Andrew Wright says they have the capabilities to serve a

family of four every 30 seconds). The restaurant has a few secrets of course. One is the fried seafood and onion rings batter recipe that is put on really thin and fried up delicately. The other is the industrial steamers that allow Arnold's staff to prep huge batches of lobsters at a time, both whole and as the delicious filling of popular lobster rolls.

But the key to its reputation is hardly a secret: The seafood is all fresh and local. The cod is straight off the boat from Chatham; the clams, oysters, and scallops are all taken from local waters. Of course, the lobsters, harvested from colder waters far off-shore, are the prize. One can choose the size, from 1 ¼ to 3 lbs. (even larger ones may be requested), and enjoy them in a variety of ways: from à la carte (all by itself) to the New England Lobster Shore Dinner (served with a pound of steamers and corn on the cob). Nate's partner Suzie makes all the "stuffies" (stuffed clams) herself.

As years have passed, the menu has transformed a bit to accommodate



Lobster roll

those looking for more healthy options. Now there are more salads, some baked seafood options, and of course, the raw bar. On a good day, Courtney Falcone, an 8th generation Cape Codder whose family's oysters are sold here, can shuck between 300 and 400 of the local fave. So if you skip the fried food altogether, there's room for ice cream, no? The ice cream window at the side of the building offers a bounty of flavors from Massachusetts creamery Richardson's.

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