

Seasoned by Salt

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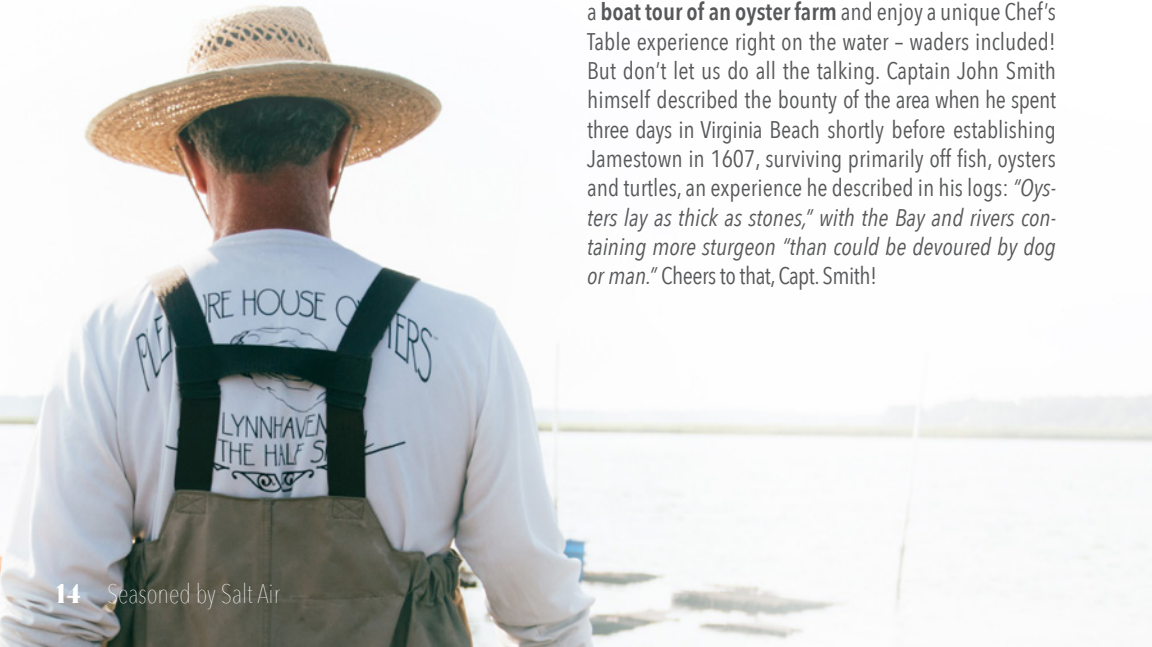
Here in Virginia Beach, our culinary scene has been seasoned by salt air. Our location on the southern tip of the Chesapeake Bay gives our coastal community a seafood-centric culinary culture, which boasts a wide array of unique and delectable fare. With the famously rich waters of the Bay, hundreds of inlets snaking through the city and miles of farmland, Virginia Beach is the place for seafood and locally harvested ingredients. We absolutely love our seafood! Can you tell?

For more about the Virginia Beach food experience, see Culinary listings on page 58, or go to VisitVirginiaBeach.com/dining.

SEAFOOD DELIGHTS

It's during the fall and winter months that our seafood craze gets even fresher, with December and January being the peak seasons for rockfish (striped bass), striper, black sea bass, flounder, speckled trout and blueline tilefish – all available within 50 miles. Our bounty has even earned us the title of **"Rockfish Capital of the World"** (we celebrate with an annual rockfish shootout every winter!). That's not surprising though, since the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay is considered to be the largest and most biologically diverse estuary in the U.S., yielding more seafood than any of the country's 840 estuaries, making seafood-lovers like us incredibly lucky.

As if those underwater creatures weren't enough, there are also oysters – beautifully harvested **Lynnhaven oysters**. Once coveted around the world and served to presidents and royalty for their size, saltiness and gentle zing, these delicious little bivalves are being harvested right in the Lynnhaven River, where visitors have the chance to take a **boat tour of an oyster farm** and enjoy a unique Chef's Table experience right on the water – waders included! But don't let us do all the talking. Captain John Smith himself described the bounty of the area when he spent three days in Virginia Beach shortly before establishing Jamestown in 1607, surviving primarily off fish, oysters and turtles, an experience he described in his logs: *"Oysters lay as thick as stones," with the Bay and rivers containing more sturgeon "than could be devoured by dog or man."* Cheers to that, Capt. Smith!



Air



FOOD FINDS

Bay Local Eatery serves up one-of-a-kind breakfast and lunch dishes in the heart of the Chesapeake Bay Beach. With a menu inspired by family recipes and our local watermen's culture, visitors and locals alike can savor a distinct taste of the bay life, as well as cold-pressed cocktails and an unlike-any-other, soft-shell crab-topped "Bloody Blue Mary."

Head south to the Sandbridge Beach area for a **Sunset Kayak Dinner** with **Surf & Adventure Co.** You'll take an unforgettable paddle through Pungo to one of our favorite local spots, **Blue Pete's**, for an evening of yummy coastal fare on the Back Bay. And don't worry about overeating; your return trip is by car, so dig in!

Doc Taylor's, once a doctor's home office circa 1939, is such a local favorite, that the menu features several items named after regular customers. Today, the historic building in the heart of the Resort Beach area provides comfort breakfast and lunch food, Bloody Marys and mimosas. *Insider's tip: Arrive early because there's usually a line out the door! It's that good.*

COASTAL COUNTRYSIDE CUISINE

When you think of Virginia Beach, you probably think of sand, sun and surf, but we're actually also home to a vast amount of farmland and fresh local produce, all available for visitors to explore – and pick – year-round. Yes, you can easily go from beachside to countryside within 15 minutes! **The Pungo farming community**, adjacent to Sandbridge Beach, is home to 8,000 acres of farmland, including 16 You-Pick Farms. Depending on the season, you can pick your own bushel of strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, kale, cabbage or even your own bouquet of wildflowers! Stopping by Pungo's roadside stands or exploring one of the area's working farms makes for an adventurous outing and is a great alternative for getting away from the beach – all while loading up on some local treats.



VISIT A FOOD LAB DOWN ON THE FARM

Within the farming community of Pungo lies **New Earth Farm**, an organic and educational working farm that allows you to get your hands dirty while learning about local produce, sustainable farming and cooking. Learn to make cheese, kombucha, shear sheep and more during their regularly scheduled classes, or sign up for cooking classes led by some of the area's top chefs at the farm's Food Lab to learn how local ingredients come together to influence our culinary scene. Even kids can join in on the fun during regularly led kid classes and within the farm's learning garden.

THE LOCAL HARVEST EXPERIENCE

Virginia Beach's first farmer-owned restaurant, **Commune**, provides a locally harvested menu and coffee bar that has already become a favorite local communal spot (pun intended). This rustic-chic café is all about bringing people together with beautiful and delicious recipes, offering warm hospitality and thoughtfully executed, creative just-picked cuisine. And it really doesn't get much fresher; all of their ingredients come from farms within 100 miles and the garden out back, which it shares with its neighbor, **Esoteric**, another local favorite. In fact, owner Kevin Jamison dreamt up his vision for Commune while working at New Earth Farm.

SAMPLE WHAT'S IN SEASON

On Saturday mornings, you'll find locals and visitors alike meandering through the ViBe Creative District at the **Old Beach Farmers Market**, just blocks away from the Resort Beach. This warm-weather favorite hosts vendors serving an array of produce and delicious bites and cocktails, as well as offering the opportunity to mingle with chefs and purveyors. The vendors rotate every weekend, so there is always something new to discover, inspiring people to meet and offering delicious ingredients to sample. Load up the car because kids, dogs and goats are all welcomed!

BUT FIRST, COFFEE!

We are incredibly lucky to have some of the most passionate and dedicated coffee houses in the area, all with the same shared passion for producing a delicious cup of artisanal joe. **Three Ships Coffee Bar & Roastery**, fittingly located in the ViBe Creative District, does everything with an artistic hand in-house. Their name pays homage to local history and the mighty, adventurous spirit of the first settlers in our area. **Roast Rider Coffee + Tea** has quickly become a destination hangout spot for locals, where their chic casual interior entices you to cozy up with a sweet treat and stay a while. Another local favorite, **The Daily Grind**, located within Town Center, is known for its delicious coffee and unique events, from salsa-dancing classes to painting and drawing sessions and open mic nights.



ARTS & Culture

Here, the art of the beach life isn't only found on the sand. From the visual arts to handcrafted creations and comedy shows to musical concerts, our arts and culture have claimed their spot in the sun. We encourage you to sit back, relax and enjoy the show.

See Arts & Culture listings on page 59 and online at VisitVirginiaBeach.com

THE ART OF VB

The **Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)**, located within the ViBe Creative District offers regularly changing exhibits, ensuring you'll see something different every time. Exhibits feature painting, sculpture, photography, glass, video and other visual media from internationally acclaimed, as well as renowned local and regional, artists.

The **Sandler Center for the Performing Arts**, located in Town Center, hosts nationally renowned entertainers and provides a home for the area's finest performing arts organizations. With fewer than 100 ft. separating the front of the stage and the farthest seat in the house, flawless acoustics and comfortable interior, the Sandler Center creates an intimate atmosphere that allows the audience to actually experience performances, not just attend them.



VB BY HAND

Beyond the boardwalk and tucked within the eclectic neighborhoods of the Resort Beach, Virginia Beach's culture shines through in the emerging **ViBe Creative District**, an enclave of art galleries, museums, shops and restaurants that showcase some of our most talented artisans, who not only live the life year-round but also bring it to life in the form of canvases, jewelry, custom surfboards, locally crafted coffee and more. Within the ViBe, you'll find an array of hometown favorites, including a local roaster and coffee shop, a farmers market, restaurants, a leather bag shop, boutiques and galleries, as well as special events throughout the year.

Local Color



YEAR-ROUND CELEBRATIONS

In May, we celebrate all things strawberry, and at the **34th Annual Strawberry Festival**, you can eat the fruit of honor in more than 50 different ways, while also indulging in a pie-eating contest, strawberry bake-off, continuous entertainment on three stages, a parade and one of the largest carnivals on the East Coast. Following the festival, be sure to browse Pungo's 16 You-Pick farms for sustainable, local produce and farm-crafted treats to take home as a sweet souvenir.

During Memorial Day weekend, the beach transforms into a beachfront bash of red, white and blue. Being home to some of the largest military bases in the country calls for a huge weekend-long salute and celebration of our Armed Forces. Hosted by the USO, the **Patriotic Festival**, a three-day event in June, presents live performances from national touring artists and has become one of the most popular summer festivals on the East Coast.

King Neptune is known as the keeper of our Resort Beach – and if you've seen him, you know he's hard to miss! Standing tall at 34 ft., the majestic bronze statue welcomes locals and visitors alike at the gateway of Neptune Park, located on the boardwalk at 31st Street. The king's reign over our city gives us reason to celebrate the beach life annually during the **Neptune Festival**, a commemoration made up of more than 40 events across all three of our beaches during September and October. Enjoy art from around the nation at the **Neptune Art & Craft Show**, sip local Virginia wines during tasting events, catch a wave, run an 8K or see how sculptures come to life in the sand during the 10-day **International Sand Sculpting Championships**.



IGOR'S CUSTOM

You'll see the work of this local favorite for crafted-to-order hand-painted signs and pin-stripping all around town. It's all done the old-fashioned way, so you won't find any computers in Igor's studio. To have something personalized, just stop in and tell him what you want.

NORTH END BAG CO.

These coveted handmade leather bags are crafted from scratch using a variety of multi-era vintage sewing machines. From first sketch until the sewing machine whirs to a stop, no detail is overlooked in building these timeless and sturdy bags, which make the perfect companions for your next VB adventure.

FIRST LANDING WOODWORKS

These fine wood heirloom quality products and furniture are hand made by surfing champion Philip Goold and photographer/graphic designer/school teacher Adam Roth. Most items, including bottle openers, oyster-shucking knives and furniture, are crafted from their signature black walnut which is distinguished by the preservation of the tree's natural color and living edge.