

# Savor Our Coastal Flavors

**W**ith its location on the southern tip of the Chesapeake Bay, our coastal community makes for a seafood-centric culinary culture, which boasts a wide array of unique restaurants 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, and that's only the beginning. From a growing brewery network and our legendary Lynnhaven oysters, to local chefs who are constantly pushing what it means to be farm-to-table and sea-to-table, our culinary scene is truly something to be savored.



Photo taken at Esoteric

## WE LOVE OUR SEAFOOD

It's during the fall and winter months that this seafood craze gets even fresher. December and January are the peak seasons for rockfish (striped bass), striper, black sea bass, flounder, speckled trout and blueline tilefish—all available within 50 miles! 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 other 840 estuaries, making us - and all seafood-lovers - incredibly lucky.



# 5 **ICONIC** *Virginia Beach* **FLAVORS** **YOU HAVE TO TRY**

In Virginia Beach, the salty brackish water is home to an amazing array of sea life; the soil is sandy and perfect for growing many edible treasures; and the beach cocktails flow like the mighty Lynnhaven River. The main hallmarks of our coastal cuisine are fresh, seasonal, and simply prepared ingredients, often sourced from our own rich farmlands. While we're proud of the diversity of our culinary scene, sometimes you just have to play the hits.



Photo taken at New Earth Farm & Market

# 1 OYSTERS

Once coveted by the English aristocracy for its size and salinity, the famous Lynnhaven Oyster is a local legend that we can't get enough of, no matter the season. Captain John Smith himself described the bounty of the area saying "oysters lay as thick as stones," with the Bay and rivers containing more sturgeon "than could be devoured by dog or man." There may not be the numbers there were in Smith's day, but the local oyster population is on the rise and we are all the better for it. Hop aboard a **Pleasure House Oysters** boat tour and taste an oyster plucked straight from the water beneath you, or order them how you like them from one of our area's many restaurants who feature our favorite bivalve.

Photo taken at Pleasure House Oyster Boat Tour



## 2 SHE-CRAB SOUP

She-crab soup is a staple of our coastal cuisine here in Virginia Beach. From the East Coast She-Crab Soup Classic to the numerous local restaurants that feature it on their menu, this dish is everywhere—and for good reason. When in the Sandbridge area, grab a cup at **Margie & Ray's Seafood, Crab & Raw Bar**. A local's staple since 1964, their she-crab soup has been voted the favorite in Tidewater more than once.



### 3 SOFT SHELL CRAB

Soft shell crabs are blue crabs whose hard exterior shells have molted, and they are found in abundance in the warming waters of the Chesapeake Bay, starting in the spring. While legend has it that they begin molting after the first full moon of May, the local soft shell crab season typically starts in mid-April or early May each year, and lasts through September. Whether you enjoy them lightly fried, beneath a perfectly-poached egg, or atop a spicy bloody Mary (like on the popular Bloody Blue at **Bay Local Eatery**) there's no shortage of delicious ways to sink your teeth into these mouth-watering delicacies.



## 4 ORANGE CRUSH

What better way to cool off during the hot summer months than with a refreshing fruity spirit? Virginia Beach is known for Orange Crushes, and if you've visited us before, there is a good chance you've already tried one. With its freshly-squeezed OJ, triple sec, and Sprite there is no turning back. They're like fries, you can't have just one. This perfect summer drink first originated at **Waterman's Surfside Grille**, but can be found on menus all throughout the city at places like **Chix Seaside Grille and Bar** and **The Shack on 8th**.



Photo taken at The Shack on 8th



## 5 FRESH PUNGO BERRIES

Just a few minutes outside of the windswept dunes of Sandbridge, sits 23,000 acres of farmland known to Virginia Beach locals as Pungo. A drive through this expansive agricultural community delivers a rural serenity and countryside charm that feels worlds away from the bustle of the Oceanfront. Stop along your journey at any one of the area's roadside stands or, for a truly Pungo experience, pick your own bushel of fresh and local favorites like strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries.



### PICK-YOUR-OWN:

Our Pungo community is a dynamic part of our beach culture. With 16 pick-your-own farms located just a short drive from the beach, you can pick your own bushel of fresh berries, produce, or even a bouquet of wildflowers and be back at the beach by dinner.

Photo taken at Pungo Blueberries