

Seafood Throwdown Community event focuses on importance of local seafood

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Most people think of fruits and vegetables when they go shopping at a farmers market, but since its inception, fish has also been a staple at the Gloucester edition.

The Cape Ann Farmers Market has teamed with the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance to stress the importance of locally caught seafood to the community and people's stomachs.

"Even though we live in a fishing community we don't necessarily understand how those headlines in the paper about fisheries management measures add up to what ends up on our plate," said Niaz Dorry, a Gloucester resident and Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance. "We think about where our tomatoes come from, who grew them, how they grew them, and how far they go before they end up on our plates."

As part of their effort, they have instituted "Seafood Throwdown" at the market. For each throwdown, a local chef will design a meal around a mystery seafood ingredient. Each chef will be given 15 minutes and \$25 to spend at the market, and then an hour to prepare, cook and serve the meal to 20 randomly chosen customers in front of the Farmers Market crowd.

The first "throwdown" was last week, and Alchemy Cafe and Bistro chef Rob O'Neill's dilemma was coming up with a meal featuring bluefish.

Because bluefish tends to be oily like mackerel, he said he chose to grill the fish over direct heat, "almost charring the oil out of it." Pan-frying would leave it too oily, he said.

O'Neill served the fish covered with braised mustard greens. Alongside were red-skinned new potatoes from an Essex farm that he wrapped in tinfoil and roasted on the grill and a succotash of sweet corn, caramelized leeks and tomatoes.

O'Neill said the sweetness of the succotash and the slightly bitter and peppery flavor of the greens helped balance out the oiliness of the bluefish.

Organizers hope to pit two local chefs against each other during the future throwdowns.

Already lined up to judge the future meals are Angela Sanfilippo of the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association, Hallie Baker of Turtle Alley Chocolates and Boston celebrity chefs such as Didi Emmons of Veggie Planet and Haley HouseCafe.

"Our not-so-secret agenda is to gauge people's interest in forming a community supported fishery (CSF) here in Gloucester," Dorry said. "Tailored after the community supported agriculture model, a CFS brings freshly

caught local seafood to our kitchens while providing fishermen with a better price on less catch. CFS members give fishermen financial support in advance, and in turn the fishermen provide a weekly share of locally caught seafood to their shareholders."

Future Seafood Throwdowns are scheduled for 4:30 to 6 p.m. on the following Thursdays: Aug. 28, Sept. 11, and Sept. 25.

The theme next week is home chefs and competing will be caterer Lisa van Sant and a chef to be named.

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Photos



Jack Rudnicki, right, of Montreal tries the bluefish meal prepared by Alchemy Cafe and Bistro chef Rob O'Neill in the first Seafood Throwdown at the Cape Ann Farmers' Market Thursday afternoon. Gloucester Daily Times



Emily Grund/Staff photos Alchemy Cafe and Bistro chef Rob O'Neill participated in the first Seafood Throwdown at the Cape Ann Farmers' Market Thursday afternoon. O'Neill was given \$25 and 15 minutes to search for local items at the market and an hour to prepare the meal. Gloucester Daily Times



O'Neill's dish of blue fish with braised mustard greens, red-skinned potatoes, sweet corn, caramelized leeks and tomatoes. Gloucester Daily Times