

# Seafood Throwdown Bait Box:

Everything you need to know for a  
successful event!

# What is a Seafood Throwdown?

*Since 2008, Seafood Throwdowns have proven to be fun, educational and community driven events to engage the larger community in issues affecting our ocean, fishing communities, community based fishermen and fisheries.*

Seafood Throwdown was the brainchild of the partnership between the Cape Ann Farmers Market and the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance as a way to promote the ecological, social, food system, and economic importance of locally caught seafood, and community based small and medium scale fishermen.

The fight to take our ocean back from industrial scale fisheries isn't a solo endeavor and we can't ask the fishermen to carry the weight all by themselves. We wanted to build a broader base of support for efforts to transform fisheries and ocean policies.

But what we didn't want to do was set up a table hoping people would walk up and pick up our information or talk with us. We wanted to create an event that people couldn't help but want to walk up and hear more about what was going on.



That's exactly what Seafood Throwdowns have done. The aromas, action, energy and conversations that spark once a Seafood Throwdown starts bring people in. They come to watch a cooking show, and end up learning about the threats to our ocean and fisheries, and find real tangible ways to do something about them.

Today what started out as a Gloucester event has become a popular event throughout the region. To date, Seafood Throwdowns were held as far north as Halifax, NS, west as St. Paul, MN, and South as Hatteras, NC. There was even a pseudo-Throwdown in Cornwall, UK!



# How Seafood Throwdowns Work

Two local chefs compete in a cooking competition inspired by locally caught seafood. Each participant brings only their favorite cooking vessels/utensils, presentation plates and three of their favorite ingredients. Once there, they discover the secret seafood ingredient, are given \$25 and 15 minutes to use the farmers market as their pantry, and then an hour to prepare, cook and plate their dish for the judges. Where allowed, the chefs also make enough to offer small tastings to the public.

## How We Choose the Host Communities

Seafood Throwdowns are about making relationships. We want the communities we work with to build relationships that last beyond our events. We want them to get to know chefs, judges and local activists who are willing to step up and make a difference. Seafood Throwdowns are particularly helpful to communities that are ready to consider creating a Community Supported Fishery (CSF) as the event offers a great educational opportunity for the public about why they should care about the source of their seafood.

## How to Choose the Chefs

Not every chef is ready to go beyond the red, yellow, green seafood lists or seafood certifications. Some chefs realize those lists were a good start, but they need to go deeper. We work

with our community partners to identify those chefs who are ready to go beyond the norm and challenge themselves, turn their cooking chops into political action and are willing to be put on a stage!

## The Judging Criteria

The chefs' creations are judged in four categories:

- Taste
- Use of the whole animal
- Presentation
- Originality

Starting in 2012 we increased our collaboration with the healthcare sector to shift their buying policies. Seafood Throwdowns that feature our healthcare partners have an additional judging criteria: would you serve this in your institutions.

## How to Choose the Secret Seafood

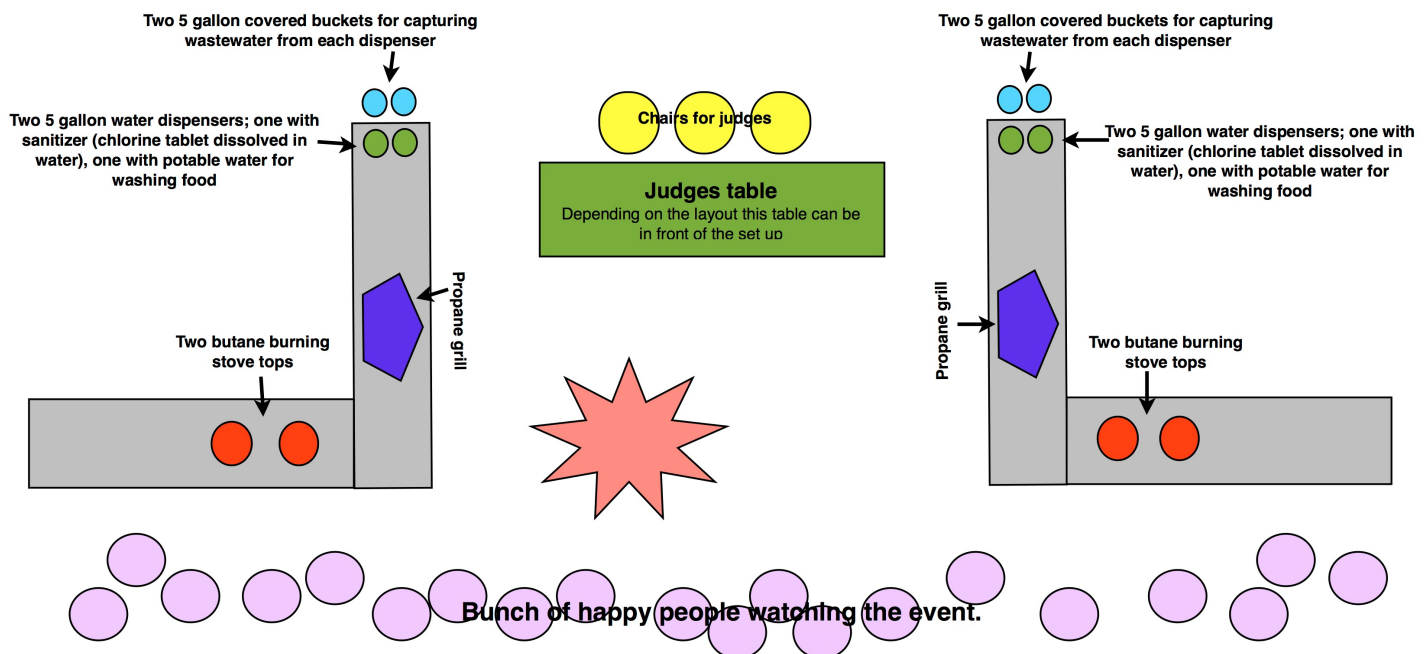
First and foremost, the seafood we use in our events has to be caught locally. We focus almost exclusively on wild caught seafood, although we would consider appropriately scaled farmed shellfish (mussels, oysters, clams, but never shrimp or finfish). We highlight species the public doesn't know about but fishermen catch, yet they get paid pennies for these otherwise valuable species. Some call them under-utilized species, we call them under-appreciated because in the ocean nothing is under-utilized. It is, after all, a fish eat fish ocean!



# What to do Before the Event

Although we're here to talk you through and help you along the way, we've included instructions to make your life easy. Here are things you need to do before the event. Start early!

- 🦞 Finding the right venue. We recommend farmers markets & food fair events.
- 🦞 Get a good sense of where the Seafood Throwdown will be held. We need at least two 10X10 spots - one for each cooking station - and enough space for the judging table and chairs. See layout diagram attached.
- 🦞 Contact the local board of health, fire department and other public agencies that may need to issue a permit or approve the event. The document on the next page usually satisfies board of health officials. Please read and understand it.
- 🦞 Look for chefs. This is your opportunity to build relationships with chefs and restaurants you believe will play a role in your work moving forward. Make sure the chefs understand the rules, know they have to bring all their own cooking equipment, utensils, and other tools they need to cook with, and are comfortable talking to the public. You don't always have to have restaurants compete; if your local authorities allow, local organizations and home cooks can be good competitors. We've included "Rules for Chefs" to share with the competitors.
- 🦞 For judges, talk with local journalists, food writers, authors, community members, and others whose participation in the event will help tower enhancing their relationship with your work will. We've included "Rules for Judges" and the Judging Scorecard that you can share with them early.
- 🦞 To find the right emcee, you need someone who is comfortable being the center of attention! They need to be engaging and not afraid to be at the mike - if there is a mike - or be in front of the public. We've include "How to Emcee a Seafood Throwdown" to give you a sense of what kind of person you are looking for, and to share with the emcee(s).



## General Seafood Throwdown Layout

# Seafood Throwdown Procedures

Started in summer of 2008, Seafood Throwdowns are a way to promote the ecological and economic importance of locally caught seafood and our local fishing communities, build a broader base of support for efforts to transform fisheries and ocean policies, and educate the public about issues affecting our ocean, fisheries, local fishing communities and access to seafood. We have learned a lot over the years and have adjusted our procedures accordingly. *We recommend giving these two pages along with the layout map of the Seafood Throwdown to your local board of health, fire department, the venue, and any other public agencies that might have to issue permits, or otherwise give the event their stamp of approval.*

**The Seafood.** The seafood used in Seafood Throwdowns is always donated by or sometimes bought from a HACCP certified, federal and state permitted shoreside facility. Once the seafood leaves the facility, it is stored in a cooler with sufficient ice to keep it within the 29 – 32 degree range. Fish used in Seafood Throwdowns will most often be gutted, gilled and sometimes scaled, but will remain whole with a few exceptions such as flouders and whiting. Fish not gutted will be whole and need to be gutted onsite by the chefs. Lobsters, shellfish or crabs will be live. The chefs are each given an individual ice chest, with thermometers, to store their fish whole or filleted should they choose to fillet their fish first and store it till they are ready to use it.

The seafood leaves the ice chest only when the chefs are ready to use it. One whole animal will come out of the ice chest at the start of the event when the secret seafood is announced to the chefs and the public, and will not be used in the cooking part of the event. This animal is used in the educational part of the event which usually involves talking about the ecology, biology, politics and other issues that are involved in catching, regulating and selling that particular seafood.

**Other foods.** We supply the chefs with olive oil, kosher salt and pepper (whole and ground). The chefs are allowed to bring three of their favorite ingredients. The rest of what they use to cook with has to be acquired from a vendor at the farmers market or event where the Seafood Throwdown is taking place.

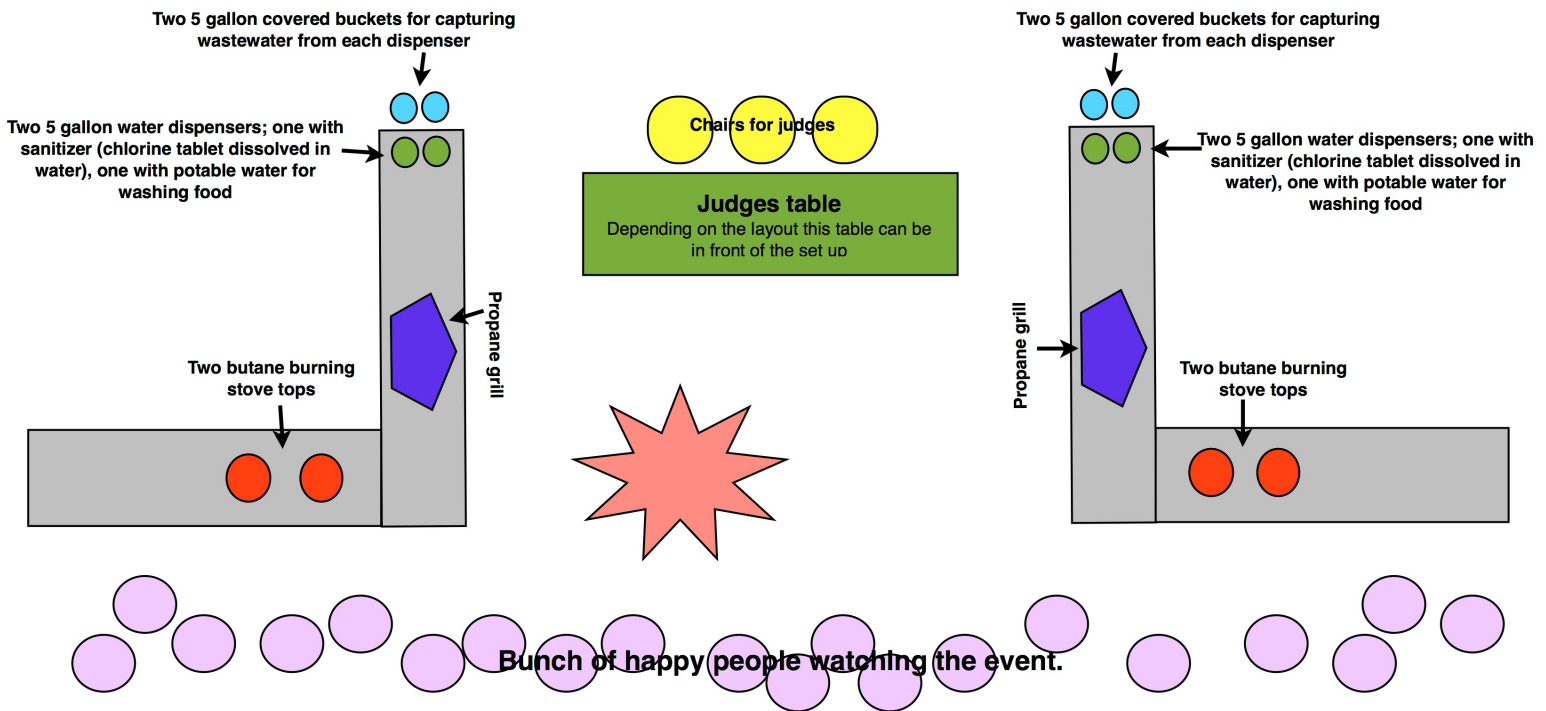
**The Set Up.** Each chef is provided with a grill with 16.4 oz propane canisters, two high BTU butane burning stove tops surrounded with stainless steel wind guards, cleaning brushes for the grill, paper towels, two washing stations consisting of five gallon dispensers one with sanitized water one with potable water, a 5 gallon bucket to capture the waste water from each of the dispensers, hand sanitizers, soap, food grade non-latex gloves, aluminum foil, garbage can, garbage can liners, and compostible/biodegradable utensils and serving plates/bowls for the public tastings. The chefs are required to bring their own cooking materials including pots, pans, cutting boards, utensils, aprons, head covers, anything they want to use to present their creations to the judges, and any equipment they want to use that we don't already provide. They are also instructed to take all they brought - including dirty dishes - with them at the end.

Although each venue is different, we have found a layout for the event that works best most of the time for most of the locations. A diagram of this layout can be found at the end of this document.

## Seafood Throwdown Procedures, Continued

**What We Ask Our Hosts.** Because this is all about educating the public about what seafood is locally available and making connections within their own community, we ask our hosts to provide the seafood from an appropriate facility using the same guidelines we would follow (see above) to get it to the site. We ask the venue to supply fire proof tents to cover all cooking areas, tables, chairs, larger trash cans for public waste, a source of water for the dispensers, and a place for us to dispense of garbage and waste water after the event.

**Further Information.** More information about Seafood Throwdowns can be found on NAMA's website. Should you need any additional information or have questions, are interested in becoming a financial sponsor of or hold a Seafood Throwdown in your community, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Cynthia at [cynthia@namanet.org](mailto:cynthia@namanet.org) or at 978-281-6934, extension 2. We look forward to working with you to create a successful, educational and informative Seafood Throwdown.



## General Seafood Throwdown Layout

This format can be changed to accommodate the various locations. Grills use screw-on propane canisters and cooktops butane cartridges.

We can supply the secret seafood, but our preference is to connect our host with a local source if they don't already have one. We will supply money for the chefs' shopping spree, grills, stove tops, water dispensers, water capturing buckets, waste baskets for each station, olive oil, kosher salt, pepper (ground and whole), foil, soap, hand sanitizer, gloves, paper towels, and biodegradable/compostable paper products and utensils for serving the public samples.

We ask the venue to supply tables, chairs, larger trash cans for public waste, potable water, a source of water for the dispensers, and a place for us to dispense of garbage and waste water after the event. If the hosts don't have a PA system, we will do our best to find one, but we prefer the PA system to be on site.

For more information, please visit <http://namanet.org> or contact Cynthia Bush at 978-281-6934.

# Equipment and Supplies

Here's a list of what we need for a successful Seafood Throwdown. As you can see, we bring almost everything except for some big items like tent, tables, etc.

## What NAMA Provides

- 4 high BUT butane stove tops
- 2 table top propane grills
- 16.4 oz propane canisters and butane cartridges, 2 igniters and at least 1 fire extinguisher
- 2-3 coolers to store the mystery seafood
- 2 shopping baskets for shopping at the market
- 2 fresh washer dispensers
- 2 sanitizing water dispensers and bleach
- 4 five gallon buckets with lids for capturing dispenser water
- 2 trash cans
- 2 hand sanitizers, wipes, paper towels, aluminum foil
- Food service grade glove
- 2 olive oil dispensers, Kosher salt & pepper
- Biodegradable & compostable forks, spoons, napkins, paper towels & small tasting plates
- Toolbox that includes wrenches, scissors, screw drivers, tape(s), bungee cords, pens, miscellaneous
- We can provide the secret seafood and ice, or connect you with local fisherman or seafood markets
- Money for the chef's shopping spree, if you can't
- Banners and signage, including a whiteboard and easel
- Tablecloths and skirt for judges table
- Small, battery powered, portable PA called a "pig nose." Good in a pinch, but limited in power

## What You Need to Provide

- 3 10X10 tents for chef stations and judges area, and preferably one for partner organizations' table
- 6 tables: 2 long ones for each cooking station, one for the judges, and one for partner organizations
- Enough chairs for the number of judges invited
- Public trash cans
- Sources of potable water to fill dispensers
- A place to dispense of garbage and waste after the event

## What to Consider

- Is electricity available? Chefs may bring equipment that requires it and you might need it for the sound/P.A. system.
- Do you have a P.A. system available? Having a good P.A. system helps to increase community engagement.
- Sufficient drinking water for cooks, judges, emcee and roadies.
- Does your local health and/or fire departments require anything that we haven't touched on in this document? If so, be ready to address them, and we're here to help.

# Rules for Chefs

**What to expect:** Two local chefs compete. Once there, they'll find out about the secret seafood ingredient, given \$25 and 15 minutes to find the rest of their ingredients from those at the event, and then an hour to prepare, cook and plate their dish. Each can bring three of their favorite ingredients. The chefs must bring their own cooking vessels/utensils, presentation plates, cutting boards, and/or anything else they think they might need. Please check with us before bringing electrical equipment such as blenders as not all venues will have access to electricity. Please remember to bring a hat or a hair net to wear while cooking. Participants must make adequate food for the judges and the emcee(s) to taste as well as offer a small tastings to the public. We usually give out approximately 50 tickets to the public for tastings, so each side should anticipate at least 25 small samples. The more the better!

Our event emcee will introduce you and engage the judges and chefs in the event. Please send a bio to the organizers so you can be properly introduced.

## Rules/information:

- Each person must bring their favorite cooking utensils/tools/gadgets/presentation platter(s) and three favorite ingredients (all dirty dishes will go back with the chefs as we can't do dishes on site). You can bring a sous chef/assistant.
- Have a good time cooking!
- You will be provided with:
  - Enough of the secret ingredient (approx. 5 lbs) to feed 3 judges, the emcee(s) and still have enough to go around for some public tastings
  - Kosher salt, pepper, and olive oil
  - Aluminum foil, paper towels and compostable serving dishes, forks, knives, spoons for tastings
  - Gas grill and gas three-burner stove top
  - \$25 stipend for shopping
  - 15 minutes of shopping
  - One hour for preparation, cooking and plating
  - Hand washing station and hand sanitizer





# Rules for Judges

**Concept:** Two local chefs compete. Each can only bring their favorite cooking vessels/utensils, presentation plates and three of their favorite ingredients. Once there, they'll find out about the secret seafood ingredient, given \$25 and 15 minutes to find the rest of their ingredients from those at the event, and then an hour to prepare, cook and plate their dish. Participants must make adequate food for the judges and the emcee(s) to taste as well as offer a small tastings to the public.

## Judging Instructions

It would be great if judges could arrive as early as possible – preferably at the start of the event so they can be part of the whole event.

The chefs should be done with cooking in an hour.

Tickets can be passed out to the public for tastings (assuming the local board of health has approved public tastings).

Each dish will be judged based on four criteria:

- Taste - 10 points
- Originality - 5 points
- Presentation - 5 points
- Using the entire animal - 10 points

Scorecards will be available when you arrive. You can also download the judging scorecards by clicking on this link.

Judges can discuss the dishes with each other. In case of a tie, a member of the public or the emcee will act as the tie-breaker. If there is still a tie, we'll toss a coin! Or you can stick with a tie. Nothing wrong with that and in some cases, a tie has set things up for a rematch later!

Our event emcee will introduce you and engage the judges and chefs in the event. Please send a bio to the organizers so you can be properly introduced.



Seafood Throwdown Scorecard

Chef's names:		
Taste 10 points		
Use of the whole animal 10 points		
Presentation 5 points		
Originality 5 points		
Total		





# Seafood Throwdown Scorecard

<p><b>Chef's names:</b></p>					
<p><b>Taste</b> 10 points</p>					
<p><b>Use of the whole animal</b> 10 points</p>					
<p><b>Presentation</b> 5 points</p>					
<p><b>Originality</b> 5 points</p>					
<p><b>Total</b></p>					

# How to Emcee a Seafood Throwdown

After five years of Seafood Throwdowns, we've learned a few things about how to create a more successful event. The next two pages are designed to help the emcee with their role and to make sure the event achieves its goals.

The goal of the Seafood Throwdown is to connect the health of our ocean to the importance of preserving community based fishing. We also aim to educate and inform on issues such as sustainability of seafood, incorporating seafood in our local food conversations and supporting community based fishing, as much as we support family farms through farmers markets. There will always be someone at the Seafood Throwdown who can talk about policies and actions - such as NAMA staff and other partners - so get them to the microphone as often as it makes sense.

## Overall tips:

- 🐟 This is not a cooking show for the sake of the cooking competition, but rather a way to move people to pay attention to fisheries issues in a new way. So always look for ways to tie the excitement around the cooking competition to our goals of public education about marine issues and support of community based fishermen. Talk about why we care about our fishing communities, what they mean to our local food system, our local economies and our communities. Why small and medium scale fishermen are important and what kind of action those watching the Seafood Throwdown can take to ensure we don't lose them.
- 🐟 Mention the restaurants often. Their only compensation is publicity!
- 🐟 Keep repeating yourself. Remember that people come and go. Repeat why we are there, the secret seafood, judging criteria and the timeline often – “Final judging and free tasting will be at ?”! Reintroduce everyone often.
- 🐟 The emcee is usually expected to keep the party alive! Ask everyone a lot of questions! The questions you have are probably the same ones the audience has, so fire away.



## *How to Emcee a Seafood Throwdown, Continued*

**Timeline for the emcee:** The Throwdown typically takes about between 1.5 to 2 hours. Here's a rough outline of a typical Seafood Throwdown:

0 - 15: Introduce Chefs, Judges, and the event:

- Allow a few minutes for NAMA to speak about the goals of the event, history, purpose, etc.
- Announce how the event works
- Introduce the chefs
- Introduce the person who will announce the Mystery Seafood (if the fisherman is there you can ask him/her about how they caught the fish etc., a little about the fish etc.,)
- START the competition and send the chefs off to shop. While they are shopping, you can:
  - Introduce the judges
  - Reiterate the goals of the event
  - Review the judging criteria. Each dish will be judged based on four criteria:
    - Taste - 10 points
    - Originality - 5 points
    - Presentation - 5 points
    - Using the entire animal - 10 points
  - Engage the judges. Ask them questions about what they do, why they are there, etc.

30 - 1:30: Chefs prepare food. This is the best time to engage the chefs, the audience, judges, fishermen, NAMA representative to talk about the issues, event, the fish, why we are there, etc.

Ask the chefs questions, such as:

- What did you purchase?
- What do you look for when purchasing seafood for your restaurant?
- How are they using the whole animal?
- Why did they decide to participate?

1:30 – 1:40: Chefs present their dishes.

We've found it's best to have both chefs present their dishes and then let the judges eat and evaluate both. That way both dishes are still warm. When presenting their dishes, ask the chefs to answer some basic questions:

- What did they make?
- What parts of the fish/seafood did they use?
- What did they like about this seafood?

1:40 – 1:50: Judges eat and scoring, ask them about their impressions.

1:50 – 1:60: Scorecards are tallied. Bring both chefs to the front to make the announcement, but don't make a big deal out of winning and losing. We want this to be an event where everybody wins! We usually have gifts for both teams. At this time, tastings are being passed put to the public. Bring the NAMA and partners for one last call to action as people are eating. Thank the chefs and mention their restaurants, thank the judges, partners, and the public for coming by... and say goodbye!



**Seafood Throwdown**  
 Three Teams of Chefs, One Secret Seafood Ingredient  
 \$35 & 15 minutes to shop at the Farmers' Market  
 One Hour to Cook

**Wednesday, October 24**  
 11:15 Secret Seafood Revealed  
 11:30 Chefs Shop  
 12:00 Cooking Begins  
 1:00 Judging & Public Tasting  
 McClure Lobby Conference Room

Fletcher Allen  
 Vermont Center for Health Care  
 1100 South Main Street  
 Burlington, VT 05405

