

## maine lobster quest

A last-minute trip turned out to be an end-of-summer, two-week feeding frenzy for our family, stretching up the coast of Maine nearly to the Canadian border.

Throughout Maine, numerous roadside stands selling clams, mussels and other freshly caught seafood hint at the treats teeming in Maine's coastal waters. Determined to find the best local seafood and to eat as many lobsters as possible, we let others do the cooking, dining at places discovered along the way.

At our first stop, the Two Lights lobster shack in Cape Elizabeth, the lobster roll is pure lobster meat piled on a toasted, buttered split-top bun with just a dollop of mayonnaise (unlike most places that mix the lobster meat and mayo together). It was perfect. The surprise, however, was the fried clams. Huge and tender, they melted in our mouths. Thus began our coastal feasting expedition and unintentional 14-day streak of eating local clams.

We had clams fried, steamed, in "chowdah," on clam rolls, in cioppino and paella. One dense, foggy day, we stumbled upon a sign for Bassa Cocina de Tapé in Northeast Harbor that promised to be something special. We returned the next evening for dinner and feasted our way through nearly the entire tapas menu, which included local scallops and delicate Daramiscotta oysters. But we came for the house specialty – paella with duck and loaded with local shrimp, scallops, mussels and, of course, clams. It was a phenomenal meal watched over by a most gracious host.

Another local treat is fresh haddock. A firm, mild white fish, it is found on most menus in Maine. Fried haddock is tasty, but the blackened haddock in a spicy cornmeal crust at The Thirsty Whale in Bar Harbor was



so exceptional that we returned a few days later for a second helping.

But we were on a lobster quest. And, without a doubt, the highlight of our trip was the morning spent with Captain Jamie Robertson. We boarded his lobster boat, the Mairi Leigh, at the Milbridge Marina. Shortly we were circling his lobster traps. As we learned to haul the traps, measure lobsters for legal size, check the bait, toss back crabs, reset traps and watch the horizon for fog, we gained a tremendous appreciation for this tough and demanding way of life. Despite the hard work of a lobster fisherman, Captain Robertson loves every day he is out on the water. No surprise. During our lesson in lobster fishing, we were treated to spectacular coastlines, historic lighthouses, comical harbor seals, the crazy flight of the Atlantic puffin and the grandeur of the bald eagle. No doubt, after our time with Captain Robertson, we appreciate lobster even more.

Throughout the trip we ate a LOT of lobster! Lobster rolls at lobster shacks up and down Maine's coast, curried lobster, lobster cioppino, lobster stew, brandied lobster in puff pastry, lobster paella and, of course, freshly steamed whole lobster. The two-and-a-half pounders at Trenton Bridge Lobster Pound were delicious and memorable in their beastly

size, but Young's Lobster Pound, a true working lobster pound in Belfast, offered the authentic Maine experience. Boats pull up to Young's dock and unload their daily catch. In the adjacent warehouse, lobsters are sorted by size into holding tanks circulating fresh seawater. You either pick out live lobster in the warehouse to take with you or step up to the rustic counter and order your meal. At Young's we dined dockside for the most memorable meal of our trip – the Maine dinner of lobster (size of your choosing), steamers (clams) and corn on the cob – all cooked in steaming vats of seawater.

The last stop of our coastal feast was Red's Eats in Wiscasset. A popular place, Red's undoubtedly served the largest lobster roll we encountered, with meat from an entire lobster on each roll. We ordered ours plain, no mayo, the melted butter left untouched. It was truly the lobster roll to beat all lobster rolls. Along with a basket of fried clams, it was the perfect ending to a two-week coastal feasting frenzy! •



## Lobster Feast on the Beach

Surprise your loved one or the whole family with a fresh feast on the coast of Millbridge, Maine. Get up close and personal with where your food comes from, learn about the coastal waters and eat the freshest lobster you can get your hands on. Captain Jamie Robertson of Robertson Sea Tours & Adventures takes you out on his 30' lobster boat the Mairi Leigh where you'll literally catch your lunch. Then, he'll serve it up fresh on the shore while you share stories of your voyage on the sea. Contact Captain Robertson to schedule an outing for the warm months of the New Year. (207-461-7439, [robertsonseatours.com](http://robertsonseatours.com))