

## The Original NJ Fresh Seafood Fest

FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS, the NJ Fresh Seafood Festival was held as a community endeavor, bringing together people from across Atlantic City, from the private sector to the public sector and everyone in between. Originally started as a joint collaboration between the Jaycees, the Atlantic City Convention Bureau, and the Charter Boat Association, the inaugural event served a two-fold purpose: To raise awareness of the Atlantic City coastal environment and to provide the Jaycees with a signature fundraiser that would help them keep their pledge of \$50,000 for a dialysis unit at Atlantic City Medical Center. That first year, the crowds were so unexpectedly large that they ran out of food by 1:30.

From there, the event grew to include the NJ Department of Agriculture as well as corporate sponsorship and went from a one day to two day festival. For seventeen years, the festival, a 501c3, was a summer highlight that garnered upwards of 40,000 people to Gardner's Basin each year. However, once development started in Gardner's Basin—reducing the parking opportunities—and corporate sponsorship was pulled due to banking buyouts and different policies from incoming banks, the NJ Fresh Seafood Festival was discontinued, much to the disappointment of the Atlantic City Community.

Bob Ruffalo, one of the spearheads of the NJ Fresh Seafood Festival, remembers, "Part of what made it work so well was that everyone worked so well together, there was no animosity...the entire city supported it...most people thought it was a city event, and it was, because we didn't pay for the city services...the city worked with us."

In between then and now, there was an attempt to revive the Seafood Festival by a Hammonton resident, according to Ruffalo. That event is in no way tied to the one planned for this September, and all sides agree that it was a dismal event all-around.

And while we've heard back from some readers that the Seafood Festival should stay in Gardner's Basin, Bob Ruffalo only wishes the festival, and those participating in it, lots of luck. "I wish them all the luck in the world...I'll be there."

### The Boardwalk Journal asked its readers, "WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE SEAFOOD FESTIVAL MOVING FROM GARDNER'S BASIN TO BADER FIELD?"

*"Back to the Basin! That's where it belongs! Seafood = water, the fishing boats, etc. Not in an old airport." – Gina Reynolds*

*"Either should be nice! Even though Gardner's Basin has a more feel of being around the ocean!" – Barbara Marsh*

*"For many years, we regularly attended the Seafood Festival and we were really very sad to see it go. However, it was revived at Bader Field one year not too long ago and that was a real disappointment. It was poorly run...Bader Field just didn't offer the charm that Gardner's Basin always did. I would not mind at all if this year's attempt is considered "bigger," in hopes that it will actually be better." – Kim Heyman*

# Save the Date: SEPTEMBER 14TH MARKS THE NEXT BIG ATLANTIC CITY FESTIVAL

BY DANIELLE DAVIES

WHAT DO SEAFOOD AND TRIATHLONS HAVE IN common with Atlantic City? Both will be making a huge splash with the highly anticipated return of The Atlantic City Seafood Festival as well as The Second Annual Atlantic City International Triathlon, held concurrently the weekend of September 15th.

Each event has, in the past, stood on its own. The fact that they are working in conjunction with one another this year only brings more excitement, and lots of visitors, to both events.

A fan-favorite in Atlantic City that's been sorely missed for several years, the Seafood Festival was formerly held, for over a decade, in the Gardner's Basin section of Atlantic City. It was, according to various sources, a fantastic festival, complete with seafood, crafts and entertainment in the quaint and nostalgic Gardner's Basin area.

Jon Henderson, owner and producer of Good Time Tricycle, the event company that manages The Atlantic City Beer and Music Festival as well as The Atlantic City Tattoo Expo, has plans to bring it back.

"We're not representing the seafood restaurants in our own front door," explained Henderson of his hope to reintroduce the festival to the city. After meeting with city officials over a year ago, Henderson kept a close eye on the music festivals being held at Bader Field (Dave Matthews, Metallica, and PHISH all had music festivals there within the past year) and watched them blow up into huge successes. Their success sealed the deal to use Bader Field as the festival venue.

"We want to produce a large footprint here," Henderson said of Bader Field. "We are using a huge chunk of Bader Field," and unlike in Gardner's Basin, there aren't any local businesses that would be unfairly affected by the onslaught of festival-goers.

Henderson hopes to highlight the culinary aspect of Atlantic City, featuring cooking demonstrations by some of the area's best known chefs, a chowder cook-off, (accessible for a \$5 donation to the NJ Food Bank, the charitable partner of the festival), and of course, a lineup of restaurants that will have your mouth watering. From Phillips Seafood and Fin to Jay's Crab Shack and Spanky's BBQ Grill, there is enough variety to suit every palate.

And though the event is based around seafood, that's definitely not all it has to offer. As one of the only truly family friendly events around, the Seafood Festival will have an area reserved for kite-flying, amusements, face painting, a petting zoo, pony rides, and sand sculpture. In addition, eight bands will be playing throughout the two-day event, and a tasting tent featuring the beer and wines of New Jersey will be available for tastings.

It's a two day festival made even more appealing with the addition of the 2nd Annual Atlantic City International



Triathlon held as a concurrent event.

The AC Triathlon is the brainchild of Delmo Sports owner, Stephe Del Monte, who has managed the Wildwood Triathlon for nine consecutive years. Last year, the inaugural year of the AC Triathlon, Delmo had slightly upwards of 300 participants. This year, Del Monte has more than tripled that number, with the count, at the time of interview, at 978 competitors. That's a growth explosion in an industry that usually sees only a 2-5% growth from year one to year two in endurance events.

Why the huge increase? According to Del Monte and Delmo Sports, which was recognized as the Event Producer of the Month by Active. Com, it's the philosophy behind the event that has helped to make it great. "We listen to our athletes and listen to the people of Atlantic City, and we implement their suggestions. We are going to make this great or die trying," added Del Monte. "And you can feel that coming through. I want to admit my mistakes and be candid about fixing them. If you give them less than your all, they will know it."

The goal of Del Monte, in addition to listening to his participants, is to give them a first class event at a good price, with first class finishers' medals, an amazing post-race meal, and a unique course: biking on the AC Expressway, swimming in the bay, and running on the oldest boardwalk in the country.

Del Monte also credits the success of this race with the city of Atlantic City, for so thoroughly embracing the event, and even strangely enough, the down economy, explaining that a slower economy makes people more likely to invest in new and bold ideas, like shutting down the expressway.

The participant limit caps off at around 1200, and Del Monte is likely to get that. As an added incentive, he's included a High Roller Program—aptly named for its host town—in which participants who get their friends involved earn Event benefits, like complimentary entry and VIP tents in a tiered program depending upon how many participants are recruited.

Tying the two events together will be the triathlon awards ceremony, which will take place on the Main Stage inside the Seafood Festival.

Proponents of Atlantic City couldn't be happier about the upcoming festival weekend. Shannon Wray, Director of Marketing/Promotions Equity Communications, offered, "For years, people have been talking about bringing it back! Locals want events like this. Events that they own in the shoulder season that promote locally caught shellfish, showcase local businesses and restaurants; and celebrate local flair. Both 95.1 WAYV and 100.7 WZXL are proud to sponsor both the AC Seafood Festival and International Triathlon. These two events utilize and showcase some of the best features of the city and position Atlantic City as a well-rounded resort."

Jeff Guaracino, Chief Strategy and Communications Officer of the Atlantic City Alliance added, "The Atlantic City Alliance looks forward to a full calendar of fall and winter events. People travel for passions like food and competitions. These events and others give many reasons for visitors to come again and again to Do AC."

Whatever your reasons for visiting Atlantic City this September, whether it's for the casinos, the shopping, the dining or a post-summer beach day, stop by the Atlantic City Seafood Festival... it promises to be an event worth your time.



Contestants from the First Annual Atlantic City International Triathlon

## AC's Got Game

And it's not just in the casinos. Atlantic City—home to casinos, beaches, a world-class boardwalk, shopping and entertainment—is starting to represent something else entirely, particularly to endurance sports participants. Atlantic City is gaining traction and becoming a city known for its endurance events.

Consider this. The Atlantic City Marathon, the third oldest marathon in the country, is considered a fun, small to mid-sized race that also counts as a qualifier for The Boston Marathon. Now in its 54th year, the event takes place on October 20th, and boasts a whole race series, including a half marathon, a 10K, a 5K and a Kids Run.

The April Fools 7K and 11K were introduced to Atlantic City in 2011 as part of the AC Marathon Series. Run along a scenic route, the entire race is filled with costumed participants, live entertainment, and as a finale—complementary beer!

Add to these the 2nd Annual Atlantic City International Triathlon and Atlantic City is now home to three high-caliber endurance races, making it a destination for athletes worldwide.

With endurance sports participants come their families and supporters, bringing to AC a whole new class of visitors, reaching the ever elusive 'not here for the casinos' tourism population. With all Atlantic City has—coastal beauty, tons of lodging and dining options, and all the amenities a resort town has to offer—it's a wonder no one thought of this sooner.

### ATLANTIC CITY INTERNATIONAL TRIATHLON RACE DETAILS:

International Race consists of a 1 mile bay swim, a 20 mile bike on the Expressway, and a 10K run on the Boardwalk.

The Sprint Race consists of a ¼ mile swim, 10 mile bike and a 5K run. The race begins at 7am on Saturday, September 15th.

A relay option is available for each race, and registration can be found at [actriathlon.com](http://actriathlon.com).