



Take advantage of Florida's abundant seafood

By Capt. Gary Jarvis and Carol Dover

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October was National Seafood Month. For those of us who work on the water and on land to supply you with your seafood, National Seafood Month gives us a chance to tell our story. Thank you for listening.

Florida is a seafood powerhouse. More than 84 percent of the nation's supply of grouper, pompano, mullet, stone crab, pink shrimp, spiny lobsters and Spanish mackerel come from Florida. Topping that, 99.9 percent of the nation's spiny lobster and 99.5 percent of the nation's stone crab are pulled from the waters off Florida. The self-proclaimed "Grouper Capital of the World" is just down the coast in Madeira Beach because commercial fishermen land more grouper there than any other fishing community anywhere on Earth.

Looking just at the top 20 species landed in Florida, hardworking fishermen and women of Florida harvested 75.3 million pounds of seafood in 2015, with a dockside value of \$230.2 million. The Sunshine State generates \$17.7 billion in total seafood sales, second in the country only to California.

Local seafood festivals are a part of our culture, and something that should be experienced by everyone. There are more than 40 throughout year, including five taking place just down the road this month: the Stone Crab Jam in Crystal River (Nov. 4), the Ruskin Seafood Festival (Nov. 4-5), the Sponge Docks Seafood Festival in Tarpon Springs (Nov. 10-12), the Homosassa Arts, Crafts and Seafood Festival (Nov. 11-12) and the annual Yankeetown Arts, Crafts and Seafood Festival (Nov. 18-19).

At the core of Florida's seafood community is science. Strong science leads to effective management, which allows commercial fishing to be profitable and the restaurant industry to deliver sustainable seafood to your dinner plates. The

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is the backbone of our federal fishery law and we entrust it to ensure a sustainable foundation for our future.

The results have been clear. Since 2000 alone, the Magnuson-Stevens Act has been responsible for rebuilding 41 species nationwide. Thanks in large part to this legislation, Florida has increased its commercial red snapper landings from 649,000 pounds in 2006 to over 2.6 million pounds in 2015.

This is a success story and one that we hope you'll share. It's one we certainly impart on Congress when we travel to Washington, D.C., to educate Florida leaders on the benefits of a strong Magnuson-Stevens Act and the need to promote sustainable seafood. Together, we work hard to ensure that Floridians and the rest of America continue to have access to sustainable (and delicious) seafood.

So get out and grab some fresh, local Florida seafood this month and every month. After all, seafood is synonymous with the Sunshine State.

Capt. Gary Jarvis is the president of the Destin Charter Boat Association. Carol Dover is the president of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association.

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