

LONG BEACH RAZOR CLAM FESTIVAL

Clam digging lessons, chowder tastings, fritter cook-off, barbecue, live music, contests, prizes and more await Saturday and Sunday, April 18 and 19

This is it: the big time. Clam fritter cook-offs don't get any bigger than this, and neither do frying pans. It's the Clam Fritter Cook-Off, one of many events this weekend at the Long Beach Razor Clam Festival.

With the longest beach in the world, a beach that is smack dab in the middle of the country God made for razor clams, it was only natural that Long Beach, Washington, hold a clam festival. Wellington Marsh Sr. first had the idea back in 1940. The same Wellington March Sr. who went broke raising rutabagas in North Dakota and then founded Marsh's Free Museum in Long Beach. The man who made Jake the Alligator Man famous decided he could do the same for a creature that tasted like a clam and looked like a straight razor.

At the first clam festival, visitors could sample the "World's Largest Clam Fritter" made in the "World's Largest Frying Pan." Women skated on slabs of butter to grease the pan. The fritter required 200 pounds of razor clams, 20 dozen eggs, 10 gallons of milk, 13 gallons of salad oil, and 20 pounds each of flour, cracker meal and corn meal. Garden hoes and flat shovels were used to maneuver the fritter.

The original festival came to an end eight years later, due to a declining clam population and the fact that, after eating their share of the enormous fritter, nobody felt like dining at the local restaurants. The festival was revived in 2013, but without the girls in razor clam bathing suits, which had been a popular attraction at the original festival.

Also gone is the World's Largest Clam Fritter, replaced by the fritter contest for Ilwaco High School culinary arts students, held at 3:30 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Park. There is also a new World's Largest Frying Pan (the original rusted out), and because there won't



Submitted photo

Chefs work on the World's Largest Clam Fritter in 1940.

be a huge fritter, this one is divided into four sections, which allows four teams of students to fry their fritters at once.

All the teams have the same coaches, culinary arts instructors Laurie Anderson and David Campiche of Seaview's Shelburne Inn. Last year's winner was not a team, though. Marilyn Thomson won it all with a fritter made with onion, potato and cranberry juice. "I experimented with tons of recipes for two weeks," she says, "and then found some things in the fridge and changed to a totally different recipe on the last day."

This year Thomson is back, and every culinary student is clam gunning for her. She isn't fazed by it, though. She's looking to win again with a fritter that has bacon and "a secret ingredient."

Her fellow students have other ideas. Veronica Sommerville, for one, is hyped: "I'm totally going to win." She and teammate Maria Aguilar weren't in last year's competition, so it's a wily champion versus energetic upstarts with new ideas. Like a fritter made with carrots and celery. Sommerville is also unforthcoming about

her recipe. "We're still doctoring it up," she says.

There's more than fritters to the festival. Never dug for clams? There are clam digging lessons Saturday at 5:45 and Sunday at 6:30. That's a.m. From there, go to the clam cleaning demonstration at the Port of Ilwaco. That lasts until 10:30 a.m., giving you time to make it to the Amateur Chowder Competition, which is followed by the (professional) Clam Chowder Taste-Off, both at the Long Beach Elks Lodge.

If you choose to dig clams, there are competitions from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday for the biggest and smallest clams. Also the best-looking clam, which will take some perceptive judging. If you didn't dig, there's a "How Many Clams in the Tank?" contest. A \$100 prize awaits each winner.

Bathing clam beauties will be strolling the streets (will there be a return to the clam bathing suits of



Photos by Dwight Caswell

Above: From left: Marilyn Thomson, Veronica Sommerville, Cedric Burton and Jasmine Harbaugh work on their clam fritter on the World's Largest Frying Pan.

Left: Marilyn Thomson, an Ilwaco High School culinary arts student, shows off the finished product of clam fritters.



2014 Wining Clam Fritter

Marilyn Thomson took the top prize last year with this clam fritter recipe. (All recipes posted on <http://longbeachrazorclamfestival.com/eat>)

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 Tablespoon Baking Powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 9 ounces minced clams
- 1 egg
- 3 Tablespoons milk
- 1/3 cup diced onion
- 1/3 cup grated potato
- 1/3 cup of cranberries (mashed for juice)
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- oil for frying

Sweet and Spicy Tartar Sauce

- 1 cup garlic mayonnaise
- 2 Tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 Tablespoon horseradish
- 1 1/2 teaspoon Cajun seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice

Coastal Life

Story by DWIGHT CASWELL