

Happy 30th, Jazz & Oysters

In Ocean Park, Washington, it's party hearty and all that jazz

"Can you believe it? We're celebrating 30 years of Jazz & Oyster's remarkable music," said event organizer Diana Thompson, reflecting on three decades of the Water Music Festival's annual music-and-food event. "The performances, the verve, the people: It's all a little bit magical. And it's only fitting that we celebrate with a big party."

Saturday, Aug. 15, this 30-year gem opens its gates around 11 a.m., and the joint — in this case a grassy fields — gets jumping at noon, swinging, bopping and swaying until 5 p.m.

A long-running festival, Jazz & Oysters has an easy-going approach that fits right in with the mellow attitude of late summer.

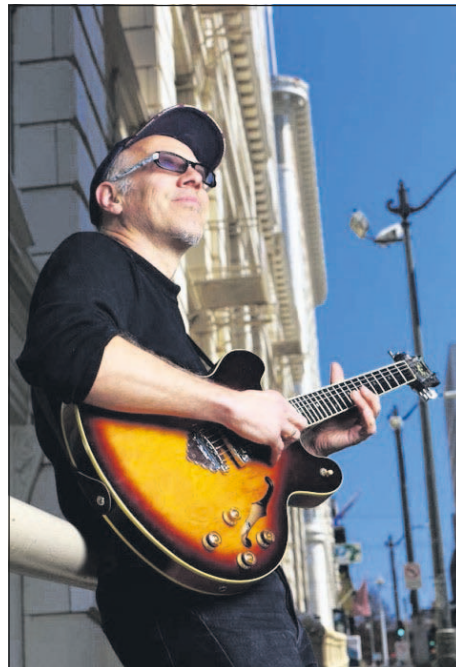
On an afternoon devoted to jazz, the scene is set on the Long Beach Peninsula: Wilson Field, located at 25600 Sandridge Road in Ocean Park, Washington, to be precise. Taylor Seafood will deliver a couple hundred dozen local oysters. (Aptly, the 30th anniversary gemstone is the pearl.) More than 80 volunteers, many of them seasoned jazz-loving long-termers, will man all of the various tables: the entryway, souvenir tents, and liquid refreshment booths — for adults and kids.

Others will ramp up what could be the world's largest barbecue; former event organizer Ron Baldwin refers to it as a "grill the size of an Oldsmobile." As the bevy of oyster grill masters work their magic, another group will serve up a wide selection of food, including the event's legendary desserts. The all-volunteer staff make this day happen — remember to be extra nice to them.

Jazz & Oysters is a fundraiser that benefits the great and ongoing music programs in Long Beach Peninsula schools, a rarity today.

Spread your blankets, set up your lawn chairs, slather on the sunscreen and adjust your visors. Syncopated drum roll please. Catch the rhythm. Tap your toes. Clap your hands. And if the spirit moves you, get up and dance.

Renowned Portland-based group the Mel



Submitted photo by Steve Korn Photography

The Dan Balmer Trio will perform at Jazz & Oysters. A versatile performer, Balmer has done recording sessions in jazz, country, rock and blues.

Brown Quintet kicks off the afternoon with bop, ballads and blues. Formed in the fall of 2002 at Jimmy Mak's jazz club, the group is a mainstay on the Portland scene.

"If one had to choose a single musician to represent the history of jazz in Portland, it would be drummer and bandleader Mel Brown," writes Portland jazz commentator, writer and storyteller Lynn Darroch in The Oregon Encyclopedia, part of the Oregon Historical Society's Digital History Projects.

Next up: Geno Michaels and Soul City. This Portland group pours on the neo-soul, R&B, funk and, of course, jazz.

"It's always a blast when I get to play with Soul City," said Anthony Jones, drummer for Pink Martini. "With band-leader Geno Michaels at the helm on keys, an outstanding rhythm section, a killer horn section and lead singers Gigi Wiggins and Alonzo Chadwick driving the ship, you'll be on your feet all night."



Submitted photo

Geno Michaels & Soul City is a Pacific Northwest group that performs classic and neo-soul, R&B, funk and jazz, covering everything from Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye and Prince to Alicia Keys, Solovive, Ledisi and more. The group will perform during Jazz & Oysters.



Submitted photo

John Adams, who has been involved with Jazz & Oysters for 15 years, runs the oyster cooking group. The music event serves up Willapa Bay oysters as well as fruit and cheese plates and desserts.



Submitted photo

The Water Music Festival's Jazz & Oysters event serves up Willapa Bay oysters as well as fruit and cheese plates and desserts.

ducted into both the Oregon Music Hall of Fame and the Jazz Society of Oregon Hall of Fame. George Mitchell is on keyboards, and it's Michael Raynor setting the pace on drums.

Tickets for Jazz & Oysters are \$25 for adults and \$13 for ages 6 to 18. Budding jazz lovers 6 and under are free. A combination ticket for both the Jazz & Oysters and the Blues & Seafood Festival, taking place Friday and Saturday in Ilwaco, Washington, is available for \$55.

For tickets and further information go to watermusicfestival.com/jazz-and-oysters

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Story by MARILYN GILBAUGH

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