

# KEEP CLAM AND PARTY ON

Long Beach Razor Clam Festival runs all day April 21

By PATRICK WEBB  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

**C**arla Curtis has a specific reason to explain her enthusiasm for the Long Beach Razor Clam Festival.

It signals the coming of spring.

As president of the Long Beach Merchants Association, she and a hard-working committee have oversight of the event, which runs all day Saturday, April 21.

“This is the event that brings on spring,” said Curtis, who owns the North Beach Tavern. “It’s really the first flood of the summer. We had a good spring break, but that’s a particular kind of audience. This event is fun because it enables us to welcome back the seasonal locals.

“I think they look to this event as their ‘coming back’ to the Peninsula — I think that’s why it generates so much enthusiasm. But it’s also about the locals on the Peninsula getting out of their homes.”

Although pirates and mermaids will be wandering through the crowds between noon and 3 p.m. providing entertainment, there is no doubt that Northwest razor clams — proper name *Siliqua patula* — will be the star of the show.

The Elks Lodge at 110 N. Pacific Highway will host the chowder contests. There will be one for 12 amateur contestants 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and another 2 to 4 p.m. featuring 11 Long Beach Peninsula restaurants.

The professional cooks will be vying for a hand-carved clam trophy created by Raymond artist Doug Knight — plus yearlong braggin’ rights. Just 350 tickets to taste will be sold (at \$10 each).

Last year, Curtis had taken over the Pioneer Tavern a few months earlier and was busy rebranding the business. Her kitchen manager, David Jacks, took part in the professional chowder contest.

“We had 350 people tasting chowder — people were so friendly and such fun,” Curtis said. “The restaurants were wonderful; it didn’t feel like a competition. It was such a fun environment, I



FILE PHOTO

The Long Beach Razor Clam Festival started in 1940, attracting visitors with the tasty promise of the World’s Largest Clam Fritter, cooked publicly in the World’s Largest Frying Pan.

## MORE INFO

**For a taste of the philosophy and history of the bivalve mollusk**, there’s no better book than “Razor Clams: Buried Treasure of the Pacific Northwest,” (University of Washington Press, 2017) by former Seattle Times writer David Berger. It also features recipes.

couldn’t wait to do it again.”

### Into the frying pan

Veterans Field will be the centerpiece for much of the action, with music provided noon to 7 p.m. by a violinist and bands playing music by the Beach Boys and the Beatles. Local beer will be featured in the North Jetty Brewing Co. beer garden during the same hours, and all other vendors will all have a fishy flavor to their wares.

Karla Jensen, who bought the Mermaid Inn and RV Park in Long Beach about a year ago, is the merchants’ liaison to the organizing committee. “This community festival was one of our favorite events when we would come to town,” said Jensen, who moved from the

Portland area.

She said all the events combine to show off the bounty of the Peninsula.

“There is a lot of work for us to be able to do this,” she said. “It’s about the community coming out and celebrating together and showing people from outside town the fascination of razor clams — some people have never seen one before!”

The Beach Barons, the group that hosts September’s annual Rod Run to the End of the World, will take charge of cooking clam fritter samples in a giant frying pan — a replica of the historic landmark on display downtown.

They will be at Veterans Field 3 to 5 p.m., offering four kinds of fritters, using award-winning recipes from prior



PATRICK WEBB PHOTO

All visitors to Long Beach are required to have their photo taken by the giant clam downtown or adjoining “World’s Largest Frying Pan.” Left to right are Castle Rock visitors Jen Crayne, daughter Stephanie, 17, Ron Crayne, and their niece Kathryn Marcil, also 17. Scores of similar shots will be snapped during the Razor Clam Festival.

years. Some of the group’s vintage cars will be parked to create an impromptu display nearby.

Once again, the Dennis Co. store at 201 Pacific Avenue North will host a clam contest for the biggest, smallest and best-looking limit, as well as guessing the number of clams in the guessing tank. People can bring in their entries for judging between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Clam gear vendors will also be there.

In addition, there will be clam digging lessons, with groups forming up with their guides on the Bolstad Avenue Approach at 10 a.m. “They’ll be taken to the ocean edge and they will demonstrate how to dig a clam with a gun or a shovel,” Jensen said.

And there will be an opportunity from 11 a.m. to noon at the Bolstad Pavilion to learn how to best clean clams, blanch, cut and rinse them properly.

In short, bring on Saturday!

“It’s family friendly — you just cannot be bored during the day with all the fun things to do.” 