

wineries, breweries and a distillery, about 80 arts and craft vendors, packaged food vendors and fresh food options, including some for attendees who don't enjoy seafood.

"People come back again and again because they love everything the festival has to offer and we really feel that it showcases the very best of the Northwest," said Kelsey Balensifer, the Chamber's event coordinator.

The festival has resolved to feature only Pacific Northwest-based vendors. "We favor people that handcraft their own," Balensifer said. "We want to give artisans an opportunity to interact with the public, and we think it's a unique experience to interact with the person who produced it."

The festival will also host two stages with local and regional music groups — 16 bands total during the weekend. Shuttles will be available to transport festivalgoers to and from chamber member hotels.

Eat and drink

The festival — which pulls in upwards of 16,000 visitors from Portland, Seattle and across the country — has a wealth of food options.

On Balensifer's list of don't-miss items: fish tacos, fish and chips, fish dumplings, crab mac and cheese, seafood gumbo, and crab and shrimp cocktails.

Her favorite? A puff pastry crab pocket with sour cream dill sauce. These come from Cafe' de la Rue, based in Scappoose.

Another festival favorite is the "Crab Rangoons," made by Pacific Crab Company out of Seaside. Chef Rheneé Mady and David Farrell, owners of Pacific Crab Company are no stranger to long lines.

"We're doing Dungeness crab legs salt-and-pepper-style this year," she said. "The idea comes from a famous Chinese street food. Half a crab is cooked, coated in salt and pepper, along with some other top secret ingredients. It's just delicious. It will be served with our house made mango slaw."

Ted Johnson, owner of Catman Cellars a winery in Newberg, credits the festival for bringing great wines to the coast.

"I think we're in an era of renaissance for the Oregon Coast," he said. "Astoria epitomizes that: the sense of adventure, culinary diversity, arts, crafts. It's a very exciting era for our coastal communities."

A sucker for Clown Bread

Astoria Clowns, a nonprofit organization, is able to pay for much of its yearly operating expenses with festival profits. The organization allocates a portion toward scholarships for three Clatsop



PHOTOS COURTESY ASTORIA-WARRENTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

A mainstay event at Crabfest is the crab dinner hosted by the Astoria Rotary Club.

IF YOU GO

What: 36th annual Astoria Warrenton Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival, presented by the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce

When: 4 to 9 p.m. Friday, April 27; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, April 28; and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, April 29

Where: Clatsop County Fair & Expo Center (92937 Walluski Loop)

Prices:

- Friday: \$15 adult admission; \$5 child admission (ages 5-12); free for children 4 and under
- Saturday: \$15 adult admission; \$5 child admission (ages 5-12); free for children 4 and under
- Sunday: \$10 adult admission; \$5 senior (age 60+) and military admission (with military ID); free for children 12 and under

Parking is limited. The Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce suggests taking one of the shuttles from Astoria or Warrenton (visit astoriacrabfest.com/faq/getting-to-the-festival/ for shuttle info)

Community College students each year.

In fact, the Clown Bread is the Astoria Clowns' biggest fundraiser of the year.

"We're the most popular booth there and have been for decades," Landwehr said. "On Saturday before the festival even opens, we have a line that goes back

as far as you can see, and we don't get the line caught up until 7 at night."

Balensifer plans to snag some Clown Bread before the lines get too long.

"A toasted cheesy melt with sauce and topped with crab? I'm a sucker for it," she said. 



A tub of crab meat