

## Crab: Many are already looking to next season

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One South Bend Products employee, who had been picking crab meat for the company for a long time, decided to take a job doing housekeeping at a hotel. The hotel, also desperate for employees, was offering her \$25 an hour.

### Difficult calls

Consumers seem to have taken the price increases for Dungeness crab in stride — much to the surprise of many in the seafood industry. But some North Coast restaurants and markets have had to make difficult calls as prices continue to rise.

In Warrenton, Malcolm Cotte, the owner of FishStix Seafood Market, stopped carrying certain crab meat options altogether in June. He couldn't make it balance out. He could either sell at a loss or charge more than what customers were likely willing to pay.

South Bay Wild, a restaurant and seafood market in Astoria, has been buying crab meat from Bornstein Seafoods. Owners Rob and Tiffani Seitz have an established partnership with Bornstein's because their commercial fishing boat delivers product to the processor. They're able to get a slightly better price per pound as a result, but it's still expensive.

Tiffani Seitz raised the price of South Bay's crab cocktail, crab cakes and other crab dishes by 50 cents. Portions are smaller.

She hasn't had to field many questions from customers about these changes. Some have already seen the high prices for crab elsewhere. For others, it doesn't matter.

"If people really want it, they're going to pay for it," said Geoff Gunn, the chef at Bridgewater Bistro in Astoria.

For Bridgewater Bistro, taking seafood off the menu



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

South Bay Wild is dealing with a staff shortage and expensive crab during the busy tourist season.

isn't an option. Dungeness crab could go away, though, if prices continue to rise. The crab Gunn got in last week was \$52 a pound. He can't sustain that.

At the same time, restaurants are dealing with supply and cost issues for many products they buy.

Fryer oil went up by more than \$15 — a significant expense for a restaurant like South Bay Wild and its popular fish-and-chip offerings. Condiments like ketchup and mayonnaise are sometimes hard to source.

Also difficult to get are halibut, cod, scallops, oysters, calamari, lobster tail, lobster products in general — "I could go on and on," Matlock said. "It's pretty much across the board."

Ocean Beauty employees are now prepared to offer substitutions as other seafood comes up short, or is not available in the portions buyers are accustomed to purchasing. Oregon pink shrimp, for example, is booming and readily available.

Gunn is in contact with his seafood provider on a daily basis. They'll tell him what's happening on the market. If Gunn knows they're starting

to run low on a certain product, he'll buy extra to bulk up the restaurant's reserves.

### Next season

Many in the seafood and restaurant industries are looking to the next Dungeness crab season to solve supply issues and possibly bring down prices.

The situation could end up being good for commercial crabbers, some theorize. The high demand and prices could give them more bargaining power when it comes time to negotiate a starting price per pound with buyers this winter.

Questions about labor remain unanswered, however. There is also the very big question posed by low oxygen levels measured off the Oregon and Washington state coasts this year.

There are fears that a "dead zone" is forming, and forming well ahead of the Pacific's usual hypoxia season. A low oxygen, or hypoxic zone, can wipe out crab and bottom-dwelling fish.

A bad hypoxic event in 2018 did not immediately correspond to poor Dungeness crab landings in the following seasons. Fishermen landed more than 18 mil-

lion pounds in Oregon in the 2018-19 season. But there is much that is unknown about these events and their long and short-term impacts on the ecosystem.

For Tiffani Seitz, the labor shortage remains the biggest and most immediate concern.

There is a line out the door nearly every day South Bay Wild is open. Restaurants across Clatsop County have had to cut hours because they don't have enough employees, driving even more people to the places that are open. Hiring can feel like the housing market: If you don't jump at an application immediately, the person will have already moved on to another offer. Existing employees are exhausted.

"I can have all the product in the world," Seitz said, "but if I don't have employees or my employees are unhappy or overworked, the customers won't have a good experience."

She thinks about visitors who have had bad experiences at restaurants in Astoria recently because of the long lines, the long wait times and curt interactions with stressed or overwhelmed staff. She worries they won't come back.

## Survey: More than 55% of county residents have been fully vaccinated

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the virus, questions about how quickly the vaccines were approved, concerns about side effects and fears linked to conspiracy theories and misinformation.

"Oregonians who remain unvaccinated share the same reasons as being the most influential in their decision not to get vaccinated: Long- and short-term side effects and the concerns that the vaccine was developed too quickly," Vogel said.

Public health experts say the vaccines approved by the Food and Drug Administration for emergency use against COVID-19 are safe and effective, particularly at preventing severe illness and death. Experts say some side effects occur after vaccination and typically last a few days, while severe side effects are rare.

The survey found that 67% of respondents statewide had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, a rate similar to what the Oregon Health Authority was reporting at the time.

In Clatsop County, according to the Public Health Department, more than 55% of the population has been vaccinated against the virus.

The survey from the Oregon Values and Beliefs

### OREGON VALUES AND BELIEFS CENTER

The Oregon Values and Beliefs Center, a nonpartisan charitable organization, has partnered with Pamplin Media Group and EO Media Group to report how Oregonians think and feel about various subjects.

The center is committed to the highest level of public opinion research. To obtain that, the nonprofit is building the largest online research panel of Oregonians in history to ensure that all voices are represented in discussions of public policy in a valid and statistically reliable way.

Selected panelists earn points for their participation, which can be redeemed for cash or donated to a charity. To learn more, visit [oregonvbc.org](http://oregonvbc.org)

Center was conducted July 9 to July 14 among 1,464 residents. The margin of error ranged from 1.6 percentage points to 2.6 percentage points, depending on the response category for any given question.

## Swap meet: There will be 'something for everybody'

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"If I can see 200 people walk through the building the entire day, I'd feel like it was a smashing success," he said.

While Allan believes the swap meet is an exciting addition to the collectible community on the North Coast, he anticipates drawing people from Portland and beyond.

"This is for the local community, anywhere from Clatsop County. I would love for people to come and hang out and just check it out," he said. "But, because I knew more people from Portland in that market, I definitely tried to pull some of that."

"I've got people coming from Seattle to table. Hopefully the Pacific Northwest in general starts to hear about it and if we make this a regular thing, it might be something that people look forward to."

When Allan used to visit a comic book store in Astoria

over a decade ago, he said it always seemed well-stocked and popular. Whether or not that community still exists, he is not sure. Regardless, he thinks the timing might be right for attracting curious customers.

"I think people are hoping to have some semblance of a summer where they get out and get to do something," he said. "It was kind of a time-and-place kind of thing. I feel like there is this new wave of energy in Astoria, particularly right now, and people are just down to try new things and get out there and experience things."

The swap meet will be selling hot dogs, chips and soda for people to snack on while browsing the vendors' tables.

"Hopefully, it's going to be fun for the whole family," Allan said. "I wanted to try to provide something for everybody."

A swap meet for collectors is planned at the Masonic Lodge.

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