

# SAMPLING THE NORTH COAST CHOWDER CRAWL

A guide to stand-out,  
local clam chowder

BY NIKKI DAVIDSON

It takes some courage to confess this on the North Coast, but for the first 18 years of my life, the only “seafood” I consumed was fish sticks.

The rectangles of processed mystery fish from the freezer aisle are a childhood staple in my Iowan hometown – the exotic cousin to chicken nuggets. The Midwest is hundreds of miles away from any saltwater, and we can be squeamish about fresh shellfish.

Now that I’ve lived in six states, I have made some serious strides in recovering from that fear of eating things that live under the sea. While I’ve tackled my phobia of oysters and crawfish, I never had the chance to try clams until moving to the North Coast this summer.

So when United Way of Clatsop County unveiled their new fundraiser, the 2022 North Coast Chowder Crawl, I couldn’t resist. The fundraising organization partnered with 21 coastal restaurants from Long Beach to Cannon Beach to offer Crawl Cards for \$30 that allowed participants to try a cup of chowder from each restaurant during January. They also asked participants to crown the 2022 King or Queen of the Crawl by rating each bowl by scanning a QR code.

“A lot of events have been canceled in the last two years, so we had to get a little bit more creative about fundraising,” said United Way board member Rachel Schack. The new crawl sparked a good amount of interest, and United Way almost sold out of tickets. By the event’s start, 160 tickets were sold, and \$7,000 was raised for local nonprofits.



**ABOVE:** Clam Chowder at Driftwood Restaurant in Cannon Beach. **RIGHT:** Clam Chowder at Dundee’s in Seaside.

With potentially 3,300 cups of clam chowder consumed, there’s bound to be a lot of different opinions on who makes it best. I’m sure locals believe an Iowan has no business ranking who makes this dish best. Still, I think I can offer a genuinely neutral take on chowder. After all, I don’t have a family recipe to unfairly compare all others to, and this was my first time visiting most of the restaurants.

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