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I ate more chowder than I ever imagined possible in January, visiting nearly every stop on the list. Now that I've tasted 18 bowls of clam chowder from the North Coast, here's my list of the stand-outs that are worthy of a visit by residents and tourists alike.

Dundee's Bar and Grill, Seaside

This gluten-free chowder comes with a generous amount of clams and features a creamy and buttery smooth texture. During my visit, the bar was busy with other diners ordering theirs in a heaping bread bowl. I could see the Dundee's clam chowder as the perfect feel-better recipe on a sick day.

Bills Tavern and Brewhouse, Cannon Beach

This microbrewery serves up a cream-based chowder that includes a sprinkle of bacon.

When I sat down for my cup of chowder, the bartender couldn't hide his excitement about the fundraiser, exclaiming, "this will end the debate about who has the best chowder!" They have a lot of pride in their food and beer here, and the chowder had a great depth in flavor with the inclusion of some spice and celery.

Maggie's on the Prom, Seaside

This fine-dining establishment puts its own twist on clam chowder, including bacon, leek, celery, dill and parsley in their recipe. The consistency was thinner than most other versions, and the flavor stood out as truly unique and savory. The view from the table easily was one of the best of the Chowder Crawl. Diners get to enjoy their meals and watch the crashing waves on the beach through big glass windows next to a fireplace at their table.

Norma's Seafood & Steak, Seaside

The blue and white lighthouse that houses Norma's Seafood & Steak is easy to spot in Seaside. The restaurant has been cranking out clam chowder for 44 years and has built a reputation for excellence. Their pork-free chowder is served with freshly baked bread. The consistency was thick and creamy, and I found this the most comforting bowl of chowder. There's some kind of secret ingredient that created a warming sensation perfect for a cold Seaside day.



Clam Chowder and Oyster Crackers at Ecola Seafood in Cannon Beach.

The Chowder Stop, Long Beach

Once you enter The Chowder Stop in Long Beach, it's evident that the owners have a solid connection to the community. The tables feature authentic and candid photos of family moments on the coast.

The homemade, gluten-free chowder is thick and traditional, filled with potatoes cooked to a perfect texture and cut to enjoy an ideal amount in every bite. It's easy to see why the Chowder Stop is a local favorite and even won the top spot in Coast Weekend Reader's Choice awards last year. It's worth noting that a cup of soup isn't the only way to enjoy chowder here; they also offer chowder fries which are precisely what they sound like. French fries with chowder, sprinkled with cheese and bacon bits.

Lost Roo, Long Beach

This Washington restaurant serves up a fisherman's chowder, including clams,

cod, Columbia River Steelhead trout and bacon. The consistency is thinner than traditional chowder, and there was a good amount of flavor in every bite. The taste was incredibly fresh, and the spice made each bite even more enjoyable than the last. The family-friendly dining room was a fun and exciting atmosphere that stood out.

After eating chowder nearly every day this month, I've gained a genuine love for it. I know I'll be craving this once foreign dish the next time I'm in search of comfort food on a cold and rainy North Coast day.

Those who missed out on this year's fundraiser will likely have a chance to crawl next year. According to United Way of Clatsop County, they're already getting requests from more restaurants to be part of a future event. "We've been flooded, a bunch of restaurants was like 'oh my gosh, when are you going to do this again? Can we be involved?'"



Clam Chowder and sourdough bread at Norma's.

Schack said. The \$7,000 raised from the crawl will go directly to area nonprofits. United Way says the success of this fundraiser is a silver lining to a rough couple of years.

"We probably wouldn't have been thinking outside the box to create this if it wasn't for COVID-19," said Schack. "Some positive things come out of a really negative situation, and this is one of those things."