

RESTAURANT REVIEWS, DINING DEALS & FOOD NEWS

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A variety of New England clam chowders found at Central Oregon restaurants.

Finding Central Oregon's best New England clam chowders

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BARB GONZALEZ • The Bulletin

There's nothing like a warm bowl of clam chowder after spending a cold winter day on the beach. Here in landlocked Central Oregon, the beach may be replaced by a snow-covered mountain, but the steaming, creamy bowl of chowder still takes the chill off. As a fan of the smoky seafood soup, I sought to test clam chowders from local restaurants.

There are two types of East Coast clam chowder- creamy New England Clam Chowder and tomato-based Manhattan Clam Chowder. There's a history of New Englanders rejecting the Manhattan style as they claim a chowder is cream-based. The feud may have reached its peak in 1939 when a Politician from Rocklin, Maine, drafted a bill to make it illegal to make clam chowder with tomato. According to the New England Historical Society web page, the law would punish offenders by requiring that they "dig up a barrel of clams at

high tide. As any clammer will tell you, that is not only cruel and unusual punishment but impossible."

New England style clam chowder is traditionally made with clams, clam juice, salt pork (often bacon), onions and potatoes in a creamy soup. Like those in Maine, clam chowder purists believe there should be no herbs and no flour or thickening added to the milky base.

While all of the soups here in Central Oregon follow the basic recipe, no two clam chowders are alike. Each of these

restaurants has fans that believe their chowder is the best. In the past, I've favored Barney Prine's Clam Chowder and stopped for it when driving through Prineville. Now that I've sampled clam chowder at other restaurants, I've come to appreciate other local offerings for their different flavor profiles.

Barney Prine's Steakhouse Clam Chowder

Barney Prine's clam chowder is only available on the weekends. Now that indoor dining is expected to open soon in

Prineville, the restaurant has discontinued takeout dinners. But you can still get the clam chowder to go.

This chowder has the most satisfying balance of all I tried. No flavor stands out above the others. It's creamy with finely diced vegetables and clams in every spoonful.

Chef Matt Casaubon has been perfecting the recipe for the past 10 years. He uses frozen wild sweet clams, lemon, garlic and parsley. A bit of tarragon is one element that makes this

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