Popular Essex Shad Bake to be Held Again at CT River Museum

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Fifty-seven years ago, the Rotary Club of Essex introduced the quintessential New England shoreline tradition; a dining experience known as a shad bake. Yankee Magazine has called it one of the “Top 20 Summer Events”. The Essex Shad Bake returns to the Connecticut River Museum on Saturday, June 6, from 3 to 6:30 p.m. This year, the bake is made possible through the generous support of Admiral Sponsor Gowrie Group, along with Fishermen Sponsors Essex Savings Bank/Essex Financial Services, and Guilford Savings Bank.

The museum’s executive director, Christopher Dobbs says, “We are once again pleased to host and partner with the Rotary Club of Essex on this iconic event that celebrates part of the River’s heritage and that supports the many worthwhile projects of the Rotary.” This volunteer-run event has been organized by the Rotary Club of Essex and is now coordinated by Bake Master Joseph Shea.

Shea states, “We offer one of the most unique culinary traditions in New England; at one of the most historic sites along the River. . . it is a winning combination!” You might find one of your favorite doctors or dentists at the de-nailing table where they take the shad off the oak planks or enjoy a freshly shucked clam or oyster from a local banker.

Join seasoned Shad Bake pioneers for a story from shad bakes of yesteryear including the year of the big flood. The Shad Museum in Haddam, the Connecticut River Museum, and the Connecticut River Watershed Council will also offer programs during the day on the history and traditions of the shad fishery.

For shad lovers, the lure is the secret ingredients and the authentic method of preparation and cooking handed down from Connecticut natives. Done in front of the fire, the fish picks up the smoky flavor of the fire with the seasoned oak boards on which it is cooked. Add to this delicacy homemade potato salad, tossed green salad, and scrumptious pies from Lyman Orchards and you have yourself a gourmet meal.

Don’t care for shad? The event also offers BBQ chicken and hot dogs. Share a piece of Connecticut and Essex history with your friends and family. In addition to the food, participants will enjoy live music and touring the museum which will be open until 6 p.m. The atmosphere is vibrant with antique cars, picnickers, and the delicious smell of shad roasting around the open fire.

Buy your tickets today to the Shad Bake. The $30 adult and $10 child (10 and under) ticket include the full meal and admission to the museum. Beverages (soda, beer and wine) will be available at an additional price. No carry-in alcohol will be permitted. To purchase tickets, visit www.rotaryclubofessex.com or buy them in person at the Centerbrook Package Store and the Connecticut River Museum. For additional information on the Shad Fishing Excursion, visit the
Connecticut River Museum’s website. Onsite and street parking at the Connecticut River Museum is limited. On the day of the event, an Essex Meadows shuttle will be running between the museum and several key parking locations that include the Essex Town Hall parking lot and Pratt House field (29 West Ave.). The free shuttle service will start at 3 p.m. and run until 7:30 p.m. with pick-ups and drop-offs every 15 minutes.

The Connecticut River Museum is located on the Essex waterfront at 67 Main Street and is open 10 am to 5 pm, closed Mondays until Memorial Day. The Museum, located in the historic Steamboat Dock building, offers exhibits and programs about the history and environment of the Connecticut River. For a full listing of Museum programs and events, go to www.ctrivermuseum.org or call 860-767-8269.

The Rotary Club of Essex is the local chapter of Rotary International that is made up of service minded professionals. The club and its members are committed to improving the community, connecting with other professionals, sharing their time and experience with the young, supporting global causes, and using their skills to help others. For more information about the Shad Bake and Rotary Club visit http://www.rotaryclubofessex.com.

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