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PLACES TO EAT

15 Best New England Lobster Shacks

Summer in New England isn't complete without a stop at a lobster shack. Seafood expert Mike Urban picks the 15 best.

Mike Urban · March 2, 2021 · Read Comments (8)

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Please note that businesses throughout New England have been closed or are operating under modified conditions in response to the COVID-19 health crisis. Please travel responsibly, and check with state guidelines and individual businesses before making travel plans.

There's no better place to enjoy lobster than an authentic New England lobster shack. Dozens of these (mostly) seasonal establishments dot the shore from Connecticut to Downeast Maine, so it can be tough to decide which ones to visit. *Yankee* contributor Mike Urban, author of *Lobster Shacks* (Countryman Press) has spent years visiting and writing about these coastal seafood gems. Here are his top 15 picks for New England lobster shacks.

Boothbay Lobster Wharf in Boothbay Harbor, Maine.
Mike Urban

15 Best New England Lobster Shacks

Five Islands Lobster Co. | Georgetown, ME

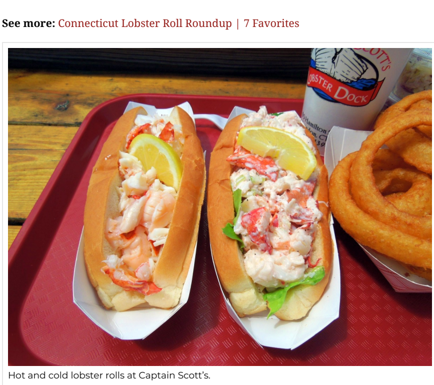
Five Islands is one of the most quintessential lobster shacks in the six-state region. Situated on a commercial fishing dock, the lobsters here arrive throughout the day, fresh from traps sitting at the bottom of deep, coldwater Sheepscot Bay. Try a whole lobster boiled in sea water, or go for a generously portioned, fresh-picked lobster roll. The deep-fried clams are also outstanding, as is Five Islands' "Somewhat Famous" crab cake sandwich. The view of the bay and five islands is the icing on the cake at this not-to-be-missed mid-coast Maine spot.

Five Islands Lobster Co., "Home of the Big Boys."
Mike Urban

Captain Scott's Lobster Dock | New London, CT

Located on a thin strip of land between the Amtrak Acela train tracks and a charter-boat marina in downtown New London, Captain Scott's has secured its place in the hearts of seafood lovers from coastal Connecticut to beyond. Try the best-selling hot buttered lobster roll (large or small version) as well as the crispy clam fritters; fragrant, clear-broth clam chowder; and amazing fish and chips. Save room for dessert — Captain Scott's imports highly touted Gifford's ice cream from central Maine.

See more: Connecticut Lobster Roll Roundup | 7 Favorites


Hot and cold lobster rolls at Captain Scott's.
Mike Urban

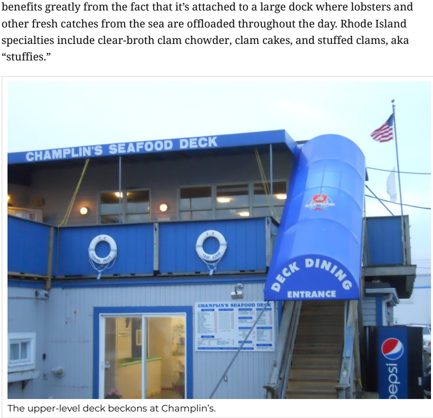
Abbott's Lobster in the Rough | Noank, CT

Still going strong after 70 years in business, Abbott's remains the largest, most iconic lobster shack on the Connecticut shore. Situated on the banks of the Mystic River, this place slow-steams its lobsters in cast-iron vaults that seal in the natural flavors perfectly. The famous hot-buttered lobster rolls come in three sizes: regular (4 ounces), OMG (8 ounces), and LOL (1 pound). Choose from sides such as steamed clams, mussels, or artichokes; chowders and bisques; and shrimp in the rough. Be sure to try something sweet from the Abbott's dessert stand.

Waterside dining at Abbott's Lobster in the Rough.
Mike Urban

Champlin's Seafood Deck | Galilee, RI

For decades, this two-story lobster shack and seafood market has been pulling in tourists and locals to enjoy the fresh-caught lobsters and the many steamed and deep-fried seafood treats to be had here. Make a beeline to the upper-level seafood deck, where you can place your order and enjoy a libation and a view of the local fishing fleet and the Block Island ferry boats while you wait for your feast. Champlin's benefits greatly from the fact that it's attached to a large dock where lobsters and other fresh catches from the sea are offloaded throughout the day. Rhode Island specialties include clear-broth clam chowder, clam cakes, and stuffed clams, aka "stuffies."

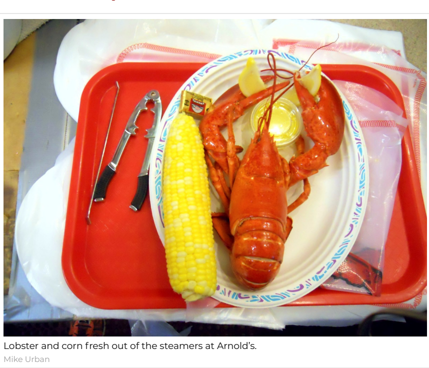


The upper-level deck beckons at Champlin's.

Arnold's Lobster & Clam Bar | Eastham, MA

Equal parts seafood shack, ice cream stand, and miniature golf course, this tourist mecca near Cape Cod National Seashore cranks out some of the best seafood on the Cape. Its lobsters in particular are renowned: They're steamed to perfection in Arnold's high-tech Rational combi-steamers and served à la carte or in a variety of shore dinners with steamers, corn on the cob, chowder, and more. The lobster rolls are served chilled or warm and can be supersized upon request. The deep fryers churn out crunchy, delectable seafood of all sorts, and there's a raw bar that features prized oysters from nearby Wellfleet.

See more: The Best Cape Cod Lobster Rolls


Lobster and corn fresh out of the steamers at Arnold's.
Mike Urban

Roy Moore Lobster Co. | Rockport, MA

This diminutive, shingled shack in the Bearskin Neck section of Rockport's waterfront is a marvel of efficiency and fresh-lobster goodness. By constantly cooking up 1¼-pound lobsters throughout the day, the shack offers instant lobster service, eliminating the typical 20-minute wait. The lobsters are superfresh, the chowder is rich and creamy, and the small deck in back is perfect for quick dining. Be sure to grab some smoked fish and other appetizers on display while waiting to order your lobster and chowder.

Roy Moore Lobster Co. owner Ken Porter.
Mike Urban

The Lobster Pool | Rockport, MA

Tucked away in a quiet corner of Rockport's outer reaches, this house-turned-seafood-shack supplies the best of both worlds: excellent seafood and casual waterfront dining. The lobsters here are steamed in large pots on the stovetop and served with fries and slaw. Lobster rolls are made to order, with each one tossed in a bowl with a bit of mayo before being tucked atop a leaf of lettuce in a toasted, buttered bun. Views from the waterfront picnic tables often include the New Hampshire and southern Maine shores.

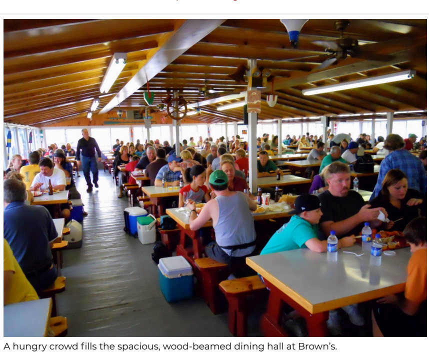
See more: Summer Day Trip to Rockport, Massachusetts

Summertime seafood feasting at the Lobster Pool.
Mike Urban

Brown's Lobster Pound | Seabrook, NH

After suffering a massive fire in 2017 and damaging floods in early 2018, Brown's has literally risen from the ashes (and tides) to hold on to its crown as the best lobster shack in New Hampshire. You can pick your own lobster from the large tanks in the front room, then grab a table in the adjacent wood-beamed dining hall. Alternatively, you can buy deep-fried seafood, chowders, and lobster rolls at an outside order window. This is a great place to stop after visiting the nearby beaches in New Hampshire and Salisbury, Massachusetts.

See more: Brown's Lobster Pound | New Hampshire's Best Lobster Roll?


A hungry crowd fills the spacious, wood-beamed dining hall at Brown's.
Mike Urban

Chauncey Creek Lobster Pier | Kittery Point, ME

Stopping at Chauncey Creek is a great way to kick off (or wrap up) any summertime trip to Maine. Anchored on a massive wooden pier that parallels the creek's shoreline, this place serves up seafood from three separate shacks: the lobster shack, the "everything else" shack (chowders, steamed shellfish, coleslaw, and corn), and a small raw bar. The 200-foot-long pier is covered with colorfully painted picnic tables, and boaters often tie up and board the pier for a meal. BYOB is the name of the game here, as it is at many of the shacks all along the coast.

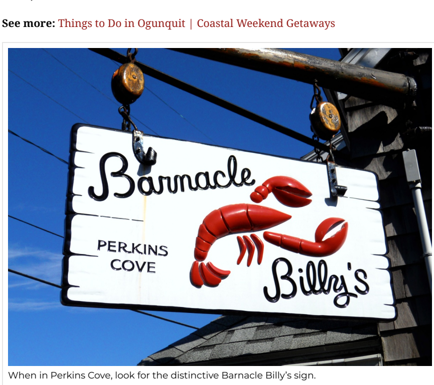
See more: Chauncey Creek Lobster Pier | Kittery Point, Maine Lobster Shack

Platters of lobster goodness at Chauncey Creek.
Mike Urban

Barnacle Billy's | Ogunquit, ME

This rather elegant shack in the Perkins Cove section of Ogunquit serves up big whole lobsters, paprika-seasoned lobster rolls, steamers, chowders, and a famous rum punch that's best enjoyed on the shack's shaded deck overlooking the cove. The Bush family has boated down from Kennebunkport for years to dine here, so you know the food has to be good. Also, feel free to order the excellent barbecued chicken from the kitchen's large rotisserie oven. (Parking is by valet only in this crowded corner of town.)

See more: Things to Do in Ogunquit | Coastal Weekend Getaways



When in Perkins Cove, look for the distinctive Barnacle Billy's sign.
Mike Urban

The Clam Shack | Kennebunk, ME

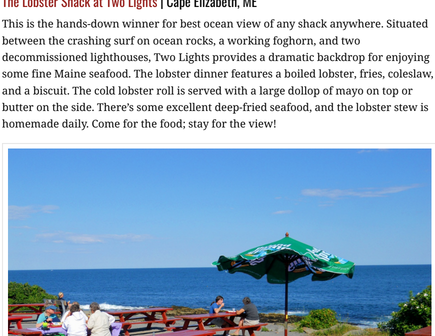
Serving what many consider the best lobster roll in the world, this whitewashed shack on the edge of the Kennebunk River should be at the top of every lobster-roll lover's list. Made with new-shell lobster and served on a locally baked round bun, this roll goes great with homemade clam chowder and an ice-cold tap beer. Be sure to also try the delectable fried clams, the sweet and tender fish sandwich, and, if you're up for it, a whole lobster freshly boiled from the Clam Shack's adjacent seafood market. (BTW, this shack is another favorite of the Bush family.)

See more: The Clam Shack | Kennebunk, Maine

The Clam Shack's world-famous lobster roll.
Mike Urban

The Lobster Shack at Two Lights | Cape Elizabeth, ME

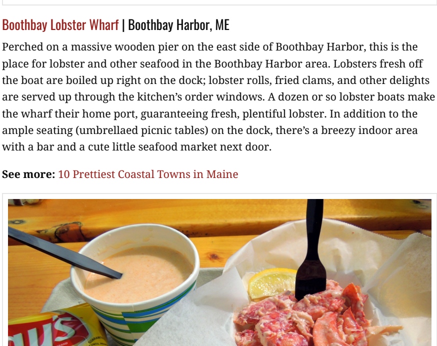
This is the hands-down winner for best ocean view of any shack anywhere. Situated between the crashing surf on ocean rocks, a working foghorn, and two decommissioned lighthouses, Two Lights provides a dramatic backdrop for enjoying some fine Maine seafood. The lobster dinner features a boiled lobster, fries, coleslaw, and a biscuit. The cold lobster roll is served with a large dollop of mayo on top or butter on the side. There's some excellent deep-fried seafood, and the lobster stew is homemade daily. Come for the food; stay for the view!


Dining with a view at the Lobster Shack at Two Lights.
Mike Urban

Boothbay Lobster Wharf | Boothbay Harbor, ME

Perched on a massive wooden pier on the east side of Boothbay Harbor, this is the place for lobster and other seafood in the Boothbay Harbor area. Lobsters fresh off the boat are boiled up right on the dock; lobster rolls, fried clams, and other delights are served up through the kitchen's order windows. A dozen or so lobster boats make the wharf their home port, guaranteeing fresh, plentiful lobster. In addition to the ample seating (umbrellaed picnic tables) on the dock, there's a breezy indoor area with a bar and a cute little seafood market next door.

See more: 10 Prettiest Coastal Towns in Maine



A meaty lobster roll and creamy "lobstah chowder" at Boothbay Lobster Wharf.
Mike Urban

McLoon's Lobster Shack | South Thomaston, ME

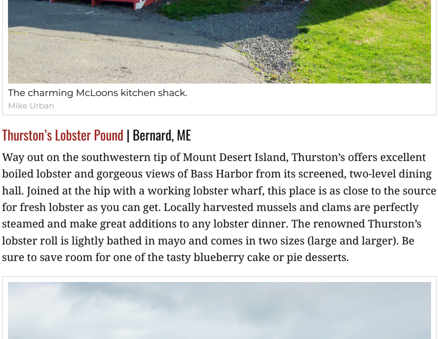
This boutique lobster shack is a relative newcomer, having opened its doors in 2012 as an offshoot of the adjacent McLoons Lobster Wharf. Housed in a cute red shack with a tiny kitchen inside, this place serves up some excellent homemade fare. Topping the list is the whole steamed lobster (you pick your own from a submerged crate tethered to the dock). The cold lobster roll is also excellent, served with mayo slathered on the inside of the bun or with melted butter on the side. (In fact, it's Yankee Senior Food Editor Amy Traverso's pick for the best lobster roll in Maine.) Clams are roasted on an outdoor grill, and raw oysters are a regular feature. Rounding things off is the gorgeous setting, on the shores of an inlet dotted with pine trees.

See more: McLoons Lobster Roll Recipe

The charming McLoons kitchen shack.
Mike Urban

Thurston's Lobster Pound | Bernard, ME

Way out on the southwestern tip of Mount Desert Island, Thurston's offers excellent boiled lobster and gorgeous views of Bass Harbor from its screened, two-level dining hall. Joined at the hip with a working lobster wharf, this place is as close to the source for fresh lobster as you can get. Locally harvested mussels and clams are perfectly steamed and make great additions to any lobster dinner. The renowned Thurston's lobster roll is lightly bathed in mayo and comes in two sizes (large and larger). Be sure to save room for one of the tasty blueberry cake or pie desserts.


Two tiers of dining fun at Thurston's.
Mike Urban

What are your favorite New England lobster shacks?

This post was first published in 2015 and has been updated.

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15 Best Diners in New England

The 10 Best Lobster Rolls in New England (Plus One Bonus Pick)

New England Lobster Rolls | The Best in Every State

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Comments

Thomas H. July 28, 2020
You make -a- me so hungry for New England Lobstah (None finer in the world) and also a southern boy hungry for a visit back to New England.
Reply

Cornelia B. March 11, 2020
Sacatucket Harbor on Cape Cod
Reply

Donna M. February 1, 2020
Red's in Wiscasset!!
Reply

Cornelia B. March 11, 2020
I agree!
Reply

Barbara L. February 1, 2020
Many years ago, we ate at Lobster in the Rough on Cape Cod. We loved that place and would stop there every year!
Reply

Rebecca M. July 30, 2019
Bill's Seafood in Westbrook, CT serves, hands-down, the best hot lobster roll I've had so far. But I'll reserve full judgment until after I've tried Captain Scott's.
Reply

bob March 23, 2019
The Lobstah Buoy, food truck.
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bob June 15, 2018
Youngs lobster pound
Reply

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