

Local restaurants to serve up fresh seafood at festival

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T rue Destin seafood will be in abundance more than ever at the 29th annual Destin Seafood Festival.

For the first time, the event has a large corporate sponsor — Legendary Inc., bringing with it three local restaurants. Thus with Legendary, along with the Southern Restaurant Group's participation, the Oct. 5-7 event will feature at least nine local restaurants serving up fresh fish.

“We are very pleased that we’ve added more local restaurants to the mix,” said Shane Moody, Destin Area Chamber president and CEO. “Being able to share our great local fare with the attendees at the festival is what the festival is all about. It also shows the sense of community that these restaurants feel — it is all about Destin and the great dining experiences you can have here.”

The Southern Restaurant group stepped up in 2006 to bring Destin seafood back to the Destin Seafood Festival. In previous years, The Destin

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Area Chamber of Commerce has been aware of the lack-of-local-seafood problem at the festival. The majority of the past vendors featured either out-of-town seafood or non-seafood items.

The Destin Seafood Festival was originally held on the Destin harbor, in close vicinity of many seafood restaurants. However, when harbor construction caused the festival to be moved to the Morgan Sports Center several years ago, it became more difficult for local restaurants to transport food to the festival and provide the additional staff to man their booths, Moody said.

Responding to his feelings that local restaurants had turned their backs to the Destin Seafood Festival, John Comer, CEO of the Southern Restaurant

Group, brought all five of his local seafood restaurants to the 2006 festival: Fisherman's Wharf, Louisiana Lagniappe, The Back Porch, Cafe Grazie and Pompano Joe's.

Immediately following the 2006 festival, Legendary Inc., contacted the Destin Chamber of Commerce expressing their interest in participating in 2007. In addition to signing on as the festival's first-ever corporate sponsor, Legendary plans to set up three restaurants at this year's event: Grande Vista Bar & Grill, Tony's and Rutherford's 465.

"With them coming on board, that means at least nine local restaurants participating," Moody said. "It brings the Destin restaurants front and center. It also speaks highly of the festival. When companies commit a year in advance, you know you are running a world-class event. With Southern's and Legendary's great res-

taurants participating, we only enhance that world-class atmosphere."

In addition to featuring seafood and arts and crafts, the Destin Seafood Festival also features entertainment.

At 8 p.m. on Oct. 5, the headliner will be Telarc Recording Artist Tab Benoit. On Saturday a headliner triple shot will start at 4 p.m., 6 p.m. with Atlanta Rhythm Section, and 8 p.m. with Mark Farner of Grand Funk Railroad.

Local favorites, including Dread Clampitt, Chuck Lawson, Sal Salaz, and Jones & Company, also pack the entertainment line up.

For more information on how to become involved as a volunteer, sponsor, restaurant, arts & crafts vendor, and more, contact Risa Garner, event coordinator at the Destin Area Chamber of Commerce, at (850) 837-2711 ext. 2 or e-mail at rgarner@Destin-Chamber.com.