



News Release

Cape May County, New Jersey

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Among the state's six major commercial fishing ports, Cape May sits at the top of the list

A little-known fact that surprises locals as well as visitors to Cape May County is the volume and quality of saltwater fishing products that originate in the southern end of the county.

While it would seem apparent – given the Jersey Cape's location adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean and the Delaware Bay – the fact is that many people fail to realize that the port of Cape May leads the entire northeastern United States for total tonnage of seafood caught.

The fishing industry is an important part of the economy of New Jersey and the nation. One out of every six jobs in New Jersey is related to the Coastal Zone, making coastal revenues the state's largest economic sector and generating \$50 billion each year. Of that, \$4.5 billion is from fisheries, aquaculture and recreational fishing.

Among the state's six major commercial fishing ports (Cape May, Atlantic City, Point Pleasant, Barnegat Light, Belford and Port Norris), Cape May sits at the top of the list in volume and economic gains. In 2004, Cape May landed 74.1 million pounds of seafood that carried a value of \$91.0 million, a number up from the previous year's value of \$81.5 million.

Not included in those totals are the untold number of pounds of seafood that finds its way to dinner tables that is caught via recreational fishing.

Saltwater fishing out of the numerous ports, marinas and public ramps in Cape May County is second to none. The back bays hold flounder, weakfish, small bluefish, tautog and striped bass. Ocean fishing offers all that the bay holds plus dolphin, mackerel, albacore, tuna, sharks and more.

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The saltwater fishing in the area is among the best in the world. Back bay as well as ocean and deep-sea fishing provides anglers a smorgasbord of piscatorial offerings, from flatfish to sportfish.

The back bays are teeming with small baitfish, or minnows, that make up an abundant food source for local favorites such as flounder, weakfish, bluefish and the famed striped bass. Stripers in the 40-pound range are not uncommon and some even top the 50-pound mark. Local jetties and piers, bridges and beaches make access to this type of fishing a simple pleasure. A bucket of minnows from the local bait shop, a rod and reel and the perfect shore fishing adventure is underway.

These same piers and bridges are also a great place to catch blue claw crabs, another regional delicacy from the sea. The back bays of Cape May County yield yet another gastronomic pleasure, the hard shell clam, or steamer. A bucket of steamed littleneck or cherrystone clams and some melted butter served out on the back deck makes a Cape May sunset an even greater pleasure of life at the shore.

Heading out of the back bays into the oceanfront offers the gamefisherman an even greater menu of fishing possibilities. Aboard a boat or charter vessel, anglers will find the same flounder, weakfish and bluefish, but also dolphin or mahi-mahi, mako and thresher sharks, sea bass, marlin and swordfish, along with a variety of other species. The variety of reefs and offshore canyons make this richly diverse abundance of species possible. The famed Baltimore Canyon can be fished in a day trip from Cape May County ports, where warm Gulf Stream waters feed the mineral and nutrient rich waters, creating the perfect medium for baitfish.

Local restaurants make the most of their unique position in one of the world's best fishing ports. With the abundance of fresh fish and shellfish, area chefs showcase fresh catches every day with exceptional and creative daily seafood specials.