

Calabash Style Seafood – What’s it All About?

North Carolina is known for its bountiful seafood harvested from its coastal waters. And, Calabash is a small town within Brunswick County in Eastern North Carolina that inspired the name – and now style – of Calabash seafood. In fact, this small town goes so far as to tout itself as being the “Seafood Capital of the World.”

Calabash got its name from a vegetable that is grown in the area – a gourd. Residents used to dry these gourds out to use them as drinking vessels. And, it was not until the 1930s that this small town of approximately 700 residents started to become known for its fabulous fried seafood. Today, it boasts dozens of Calabash seafood restaurants.

Calabash-style seafood is lightly breaded and fried and typically served buffet style. The seafood is always accompanied with the ever popular side dish – hushpuppies. Corn meal is used instead of flour to give the seafood a light coating. The seafood is then fried in hot oil and becomes golden brown.

Fish Camps and the Calabash-style Seafood

In the 1930s, fish camps served this Calabash-style seafood in an outdoor setting. Restaurants throughout the state of North Carolina soon began to follow suit and to cash in on this popular style of frying seafood.

George Baxevanis, owner of Fisherman’s Quarters II, a busy family seafood restaurant, located in Asheville, NC, is certainly qualified to speak about Calabash-style seafood!

And, while Baxevanis’ restaurant may be located in the mountains of western North Carolina, it still serves up hundreds of pounds of shrimp, flounder and other types of fresh seafood to produce its award-winning Calabash-style seafood.

In fact, Fisherman’s Quarters II is Asheville’s only true southern fried fish house.

Fisherman’s Quarters II Fries up Its Famous Calabash-Style Seafood

Baxevanis explains that when frying seafood, the oil must be clean and hot. Next, he explains, “You have to start out with the freshest and best fish or seafood that you can buy!” George shares his award-winning recipe for fried, Calabash-style seafood.

This breading will work on almost any type of seafood that you can find at your local market.

Calabash Breading

- 2 tablespoons all purpose flour
- ½ cup bread crumbs
- 1/3 cup cornmeal
- 1 egg

Method

1. Combine the flour and cornmeal and place on a plate. Place the breadcrumbs on another plate.
2. Scramble the egg with a little water (about 2 teaspoons); this makes the egg lighter.
3. Rinse your fish off and pat dry.
4. Dip your dried filets in egg, then cornmeal mix, then egg mix and lastly bread crumbs.
5. Fry each filet for about 3 minutes on each side.
6. Serve with cocktail or tartar sauce. Always offer hot sauce as well.

Here in North Carolina, Texas Pete is a popular hot sauce and made right in the Tar Heel State. Baxevanis suggests serving this Calabash-style seafood with hushpuppies, French fries, coleslaw or whatever you and your family may enjoy.

For more seafood articles and recipes check out the Fisherman's Quarters II website at:
http://fishermansquarters.info