

## Guinness Red Bank Oyster Festival imports Irish tradition

By **MICHELLE GLADDEN** • STAFF WRITER •  
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**RED BANK** — Myth number one: September is here; it's finally safe to eat oysters.

While it was long thought one should eat oysters only during months with the letter R in them, it no longer holds true because the ability to control transport temperatures, Lusty Lobster owner Doug Douty said during the inaugural Guinness Red Bank Oyster Festival held Sunday.

Yet, some traditions run deep.

Across the globe, many people celebrate that first burst of cool air by giving in to the Pavlovian response to squirt lemon and jot a dash of horseradish, hot sauce or cocktail sauce atop a half dozen.

In Galway, Ireland, there's a 56-year-old international festival dedicated to all things oysters, especially once paired with a pint — typically a Guinness stout.

And on Sunday, as the five-day Galway festival was drawing to a close, local organizers had fashioned a 7-hour celebration after the Irish tradition of pairing the affectionately called "sliders" with a "blond-in-a-black dress."

"There's something about the hops and the salinity," Lusty Lobster general manager Shaun Garrity said of the famous combo both rumored to be aphrodisiacs.

Based in Highlands, the oyster purveyor was one of only two out-of-town vendors showcased at the event. At start of day, 12,400 oysters lay in waiting.

Point Distributors, which provided the stout, was the only other purveyor not based in the borough.

But the two were at the heart of the festival.

"It's velvety in texture and rich in body," Ireland native Connor Powell of The Dublin House said of the stout.

"You know what they say (about the stout)," said co-owner Sean Dunne, also an Irish native. "There is a baby in every pint."

The Dublin House co-sponsored the event in conjunction with RiverCenter and the Asbury Park Press. RiverCenter represents the special improvement business district, which runs east of Shrewsbury Avenue.

Dunne and Powell said the beer is rich in protein and iron, and often was used for medicinal purposes.

"When someone came home from hospital, the doctor would tell them to drink it," Powell said.

Meanwhile, Douty and Garrity tout the low calories and array of minerals and vitamins found in the briny mollusk.

"The best way to eat them is to savor it like a glass of wine," Garrity said.

But Long Branch resident Lenny Antonucci preferred the horseradish and hot sauce combo on his half dozen.

"It's an acquired taste," said Antonucci, 49. "This way there's a better chance any bacteria that may be in there won't survive."

"I came for the Guinness," said Bridgewater resident Tim Keane, 41, who was meandering through the vendor stalls, stout in hand, with Melissa Cotta, 29, and Cyndi Colangelo, 28, both of Wall, and Glen



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Ferrara, 36, of Brick.

With a roster of bands playing on two stages, the festival also showcased two dozen local eateries as well as a number of local shops offering everything from fashion accessories to on-site massages.

"We have so many great restaurants in Red Bank," said RiverCenter director Nancy Adams. "It was important to spotlight them to make this event stand a part."

**Michelle Gladden: 732-643-4095; [mgladden@app.com](mailto:mgladden@app.com); [twitter.com/mgladdenAPP](https://twitter.com/mgladdenAPP)**



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Andrew Connor of Rumson and Dan Pollard of Atlantic Highlands shuck oysters at a booth run by the Lusty Lobster, located in Highlands, at the Guinness Oyster Festival on Sunday in Red Bank. (STAFF PHOTO: ROBERT WARD)



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NO, I have *some* rules!

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