

Top 5 Southern Seafood Dishes



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From fried fish to shrimp plain or fancy, here are some of the top seafood dishes to try if you want to experience southern coastal cuisine at its best.



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You know you are in a seafood restaurant in the Coastal South when 1) the place smells like frying seafood so succulent, your tongue wants to slap your ear off; 2) the seafood was swimming free just a very short time ago; and 3) there's probably rice in the salt shakers because of the humidity.

If you are a lover of good, fresh, delicious seafood, you need to head down to the coast of Georgia, Alabama or Florida—take your pick. They all have beautiful beaches, friendly people and seafood that has never seen the inside of a freezer. I saw a show on TV the other night in which some guy pushed away a plate of fish, saying he didn't like fish, never had. And I thought, "Honey, you have just never had really good seafood, because if you had, you would never utter those words again."

They like their seafood fresh in the Coastal South and they like it plain or fancied up—you just can't ruin really good seafood. Fresh shrimp boiled and served with homemade cocktail sauce? Yep. Fish garnished with fancy spices, sautéed and served with delectable vegetables and fancy garnish? Yep. I like it all. But here are some of my favourites.

1. Low Country Boil

I can't even begin to tell you how many years we bought fresh shrimp straight off the shrimp boats at [Joe Patti's](#) in Pensacola, then stood in front of the kitchen sink at our beach house for hours peeling shrimp, which we then plunged into boiling water and peeled and ate with our fingers until we pushed away from the table, absolutely stuffed.

The only comparably fresh shrimp I have eaten was a low country boil at [The Crab Shack](#) on Tybee Island, Georgia.



A traditional low country boil has shrimp, sausage, potatoes and corn, and the one you order at The Crab Shack and eat on the wooden patio overlooking the marsh with ceiling fans whirring above your head is precisely that. My only suggestion is to order the smashed potatoes instead of the new potatoes. They are both great but the smashed potatoes are seasoned up just right—believe me, you will be tempted to send me a thank you note.

2. Shrimp and Grits

Never one to turn up my nose at shrimp prepared pretty much any old way, I was interested to see shrimp and grits on a lot of menus in the Coastal South. I tried it at a number of places, but the best plate of shrimp, sausage, onions and red peppers in a sherry Cajun cream sauce served over stone ground grits was at [The Pirates House](#) in Savannah, Georgia.



While you enjoy that incredible meal, mull over the fact that this restaurant has been in business since 1753 and the waiters and waitresses will be more than happy to tell you about the history, which involves, wouldn't you know it? Pirates.

3. Shrimp Po'Boy

Take fresh, boiled shrimp, cut it up into little pieces, add some mayonnaise and maybe some spices and you have shrimp salad. Now pop that salad onto a fresh roll and you have a shrimp po'boy, truly a staple

of the Coastal South. One of the best I have ever eaten was at [Peg Leg Pete's](#) on Pensacola Beach. I might possibly have gone there for lunch twice in one week. OK, three times.

Alternately, you can take that shrimp, grill it and stuff it into a quesadilla with some bacon and cheese just like they do at [Spanky's on the River](#) in Savannah, Georgia. Don't even think about ordering anything else when you are there.



4. Sautéed Grouper

I haven't found a white, flaky fish that I didn't like yet and, if they are truly fresh, you can get away with just lightly sautéing them with maybe some butter and seasoning. Grouper is one of my favourite fish and you are not going to find it sautéed any better than at [The Marlin Grill](#) in Baytown Wharf at the Sandestin Resort in Miramar Beach, Florida.



I have eaten this fresh local grouper sautéed with lump crab meat, shrimp and a Bienville sauce topped with lemon butter three times now and I could go there right this minute and eat it again. I cannot figure out how they get this grouper so tender it literally melts in your mouth, but I am willing to keep trying. Don't forget to keep snagging the fresh bread from the girl with the basket because she will just keep coming around.

5. Fancied-Up Breaded Fish

One of the ways to fancy up a fish is to bread it with anything from seasoned flour to cornmeal and throw it into some hot oil. Crispy, hot, delicious—this is the way to eat fish. Some of the best fried fish I have ever eaten was at [Lulu's](#), Lucy Buffet's (yes, that Buffet) restaurant in Gulf Shores, Alabama.



A live band, a wooden deck open to the breezes from the water and great seafood make for a perfect night out. Order the fabulous onion rings appetizer before your fish basket, but be prepared to share as they will bring you a basket of onion rings as big as your head.

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JAN ROSS



After a lifetime of travel, Jan Ross can pack a bag and hit the road with very little notice, although she will always have a little black dress and some snazzy shoes in there. She loves to travel with her husband of more than 35 years as he is a great photographer and she is often way too busy having fun to think about taking pictures. Active travel or relaxing, she is up for it all!

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