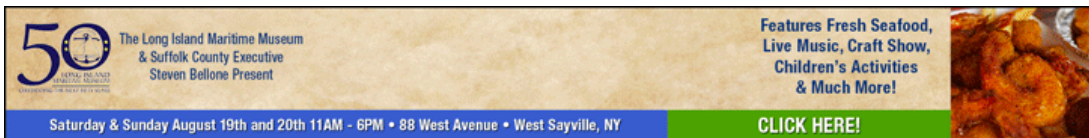


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THINGS TO DO / FEEDME



Hampton Bays restaurants: How to eat your way through town



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Get your food groove on in Hampton Bays

NewsdayTV's Macy Egeland and Newsday FeedMe reporter Erica Marcus visit the best summer spots in Hampton Bays.

By Erica Marcus

erica.marcus@newsday.com [@Erica_Marcus](https://twitter.com/Erica_Marcus)

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Hugging the east and west banks of the Shinnecock Canal as well as the coastlines of both Shinnecock and Peconic

bays, it's no wonder that shorebirds have been flocking to Hampton Bays since long before 1922, when eleven hamlets merged to become one.

Downtown is not the hub of activity that it is elsewhere in the Hamptons; most of Hampton Bays' restaurants are a short drive away. There's a wealth of dining options, many of them big, well-established and popular. So popular, in fact, that waiting in line for dinner might be considered one the hamlet's most popular weekend activities.

The restaurants you'll pass along Montauk Highway certainly fall into that category: **Centro Trattoria & Bar** (modern Italian), **1 North Steakhouse** (the only proper steakhouse for a good 15 miles in any direction) and **Barona Bay** (upscale pub food with live music) — as well as **Sundays on the Bay** and **Oakland's** on Dune Road and **Edgewater** east of the canal.

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At 5 p.m., Edgewater is already hopping, with people enjoying meatballs & burrata marinara or veal Milanese in the dining room, at the bar and on the wraparound porch with views of the water. A half-mile west, the view is similar, but the scene is comparatively serene. Among the other options:

R. AIRE at Hampton Maid

259 E Montauk Hwy.

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This is the workshop of chef Alex Bujoreanu, a practitioner of Spanish-inflected modernist cuisine, who revamped the restaurant at the venerable Hampton Maid hotel two years ago. Initially, R. AIRE only served fixed-price chef's tasting dinners on weekends but now these are offered a few times a month and the regular a la carte menu, served Tuesday to Saturday, is a much more approachable affair. Bujoreanu's tapas are traditional but are

plated with modern flair — a line of croquette soldiers each with a little mayonnaise helmet, fried artichokes with black-garlic aioli, grilled octopus with a shocking-green pea puree. His paella may come as a surprise to Long Islanders expecting a big pot of yellow rice obscured by multiple seafood species. These paellas, which require a two-person minimum, feature short-grain Bomba rice that first picks up the flavor of the broth, and then caramelizes on the bottom of the pan. The seafood paella (calamari, mussels, shrimp and clams) is a winner, but so is the "rustic" with chorizo, pork and chicken, or the more fanciful "chuleton" with Wagyu rib-eye or "land and sea" with Wagyu filet mignon and lobster. More info: 631-728-4184, hamptonmaid.com



Rustic paella at R.Aire at Hampton Maid in Hampton Bays. Credit: Stephanie Foley

Good Ground Tavern

239 E Montauk Hwy.

The year-old Canoe Place luxury resort hosts Hampton Bays' other high-end culinary newcomer: Good Ground Tavern encompasses two rustic-sleek dining room, a cozy bar and, shaded by billowing green-and-white-striped awnings, one of Long Island's loveliest terraces for eating al fresco. Ülfet Ralph, an American-trained native of Istanbul, has crafted a contemporary menu that ranges from Mediterranean-tinged summer melon gazpacho with fennel and yogurt, Peconic Bay clam pizza with Calabrian chili and caciocavallo cheese, olive-oil-poached halibut with spinach and puttanesca sauce and summer-vegetable risotto to wood-grilled scallops with summer pole beans and cauliflower purée to more American fare such as a Wagyu cheeseburgers and roasted heritage chicken with hen of the woods mushrooms. More info: 631-763-6300, canoeplace.com

Canal Cafe

44 Newtown Rd.

Tucked away in the marina of Hampton Watercraft and Marine, it has outdoor dining on two levels and a casual, family-friendly vibe. Not surprisingly, seafood makes a strong showing here: steamed PEI mussels or littleneck clams, fried shrimp calamari, shrimp or oysters (naked or in a po'boy), clam fritters with horseradish mayo, pan-fried crab cakes, a grilled mahi mahi sandwich with avocado aioli, fish and chips and a lobster roll made fresh with celery and lemon mayo. For culinary landlubbers: sweet Thai chili-glazed duck wings, a half-pound burger with your choice of cheese, fried chicken sandwich with baby arugula and a burger made with quinoa and roasted garlic. More info: 631-723-2155, thecanalcafe.com

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Cowfish

258 E Montauk Hwy.

The imposing, multistoried structure which offers 270-degree views of the canal and the bay. What *isn't* there at Cowfish? Beyond a vaulted, light-filled dining room with two dining decks, an outdoor bar, picnic tables, a play area for kids and boat slips ... Rachel and David Hersh opened the restaurant in 2012 and their menu has something for everyone: creamy clam chowder for the traditionalist, tuna poke with strawberries, mango and avocado for the tropically minded, NOLA shrimp with rice for Cajun cravings, baby back ribs or a cowboy rib-eye for the carnivore, fish or chicken fingers for small fries. Cowfish was actually the Hershes' second canal-side eatery; their first restaurant (they now own seven) was Rumba, located about a half mile south. More info: 631-594-3868, cowfishrestaurant.com

Clam chowder served at Cowfish in Hampton Bays. Credit: Randee Daddona

Rumba

43 Canoe Place Rd.

With its ramshackle charm and Caribbean-inflected menu, Rumba offers a slice of the Islands on The Island and its menu draws from warm-weather climes all over the globe: Barbados cream roasted-garlic Caesar, blackened mahi mahi with plantain and banana-coconut rum reduction, Dominican ribs with sweet chili-ginger soy glaze; soy-sugar cane salmon with coconut risotto, Thai green-curry cod. From America's own tropical island comes a fantastic Key lime pie with a graham cracker-pecan crust. Rumba's seating capacity is small — 65 to Cowfish's 150 — and there's barely any room for parked cars or waiting for a table. That's what inspired the Hershes to launch the RumBarge, a shipshape little ferry that shuttles customers between the two venues. Put your name on the waitlist at Rumba and motor up to Cowfish for a drink (they'll text you when your table is ready). Or, dine at Cowfish and get some of that Rumba Key lime pie for dessert. More info: 631-594-3544, rumbahamptonbays.com

Key lime pie at Rumba in Hampton Bays. Credit: Randee Daddona

HAMPTON BAYS SEAFOOD MARKETS

Fishing has always been big business in Hampton Bays — a vibrant commercial fishing fleet makes its home at the eastern terminus of Dune Road, and there are also a number of charters based there. So it's no surprise that the town boasts two fine fish markets.

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Out of the Blue

252 E. Montauk Hwy.

A great source for local seafood as well as house-smoked salmon, swordfish, tuna, scallops and more. There are also tables inside and on the porch where you can order clams on the half shell and fish sandwiches, buckets of steamed shellfish and baskets of fried shellfish, a full-scale lobster bake or excellent fish and chips. More info: 631-728-3474, ootbseafood.com

Fish and chips at Out of the Blue in Hampton Bays. Credit: Newsday/Erica Marcus

Lighthouse Seafood

36 Lighthouse Rd.

After more than 25 years owning one of Long Island's best fish stores, Cor J Seafood Market, Jim Coronesi sold it to the brothers-and-sister team of Mike, Neil and Deirdre Hanrahan in 2021. They named renamed it Lighthouse, but changed little else: It's still the rare market where customers can watch the fish cutters at work, whether filleting a bucket of fluke or breaking down a whole halibut – watch out for flying scales. This year, the Hanrahans set up a few picnic tables right on the water, with views of Shinnecock Bay and the Ponquogue Bridge, and hired chef Blair Shapiro to create a menu that combines the expected (raw bar, chowders, lobster bakes, fried fish) with some more upscale items (broiled swordfish with herb butter, local fish ceviche). But even Shapiro's most prosaic dishes show her delicate touch: a sprig of dill tucked into the lobster roll, tender local lettuce cradling the fried fluke. More info: 631-728-5186, lighthouseseafoodhb.com

A fried fluke sandwich at Lighthouse Seafood in Hampton Bays. Credit: Newsday/Erica Marcus

MEXICAN RESTAURANTS

You can't drive through Hampton Bays without noting the preponderance of Latino eateries and markets. Downtown you'll find the bakery-deli **Antojitos**, the more upscale **Guava** and, hidden in the Hamlet Green shopping center, **Atlixco**, named for a city in the Mexican state of Puebla whose unabashedly authentic menu features tamales and chilaquiles, pozole (hominy soup), panza de res (stewed tripe) and tlacoyos (thick, stuffed tortillas) along with tortas and tacos. Prepare to use your Spanish here. And, heading east on Montauk Highway you'll pass the sit-down, Mexican-American **El Mariachi** and **La Fogata**.

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Taqueria Mi Pueblito

204 E. Montauk Hwy.

In the optimal balance of authenticity and accessibility, this tiny red structure contains multitudes: a full-scale Mexican grocery with nuts and grains, packaged tortillas, dried chilies, fresh juices, fresh tomatillos and nopales, house-fried chicharron, tubs of mole, dried banana leaves, handcrafted toys. The menu ranges from excellent tacos to sopas and huaraches (thicker than tacos), flautas and tostadas (fried) plus meat and fish platters, enchiladas,

Tacos at Mi Pueblito Taqueria in Hampton Bays. Credit: Newsday/Erica Marcus

THINGS TO DO IN HAMPTON BAYS

EXPLORE DOWNTOWN: Although downtown Hampton Bays is not the culinary epicenter, you should still visit. **Good Ground Antique Center**, more than a century old, is a treasure-trove of affordable, not-quite-antique housewares, jewelry, artwork and more. A few doors down is the more selective (and expensive) **Antiques by James Maguire**, established in 2001, almost destroyed by fire in 2022, and gloriously reopened this year. If you're in a historical state of mind, you'll want to visit **The Lyzon Hat Museum** (open Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. — 1 p.m.), the lovingly restored shop of milliners Walter and Helen King where dozens of vintage hats repose in all their felted and feathered glory. Downtown is also where you'll find the 38-acre **Good Ground Park**, which is especially kid-friendly with its interpretive pollinator garden, soft-paved playground and clean public bathrooms. The park's amphitheater hosts live events (upcoming shows on Aug. 17, 24 and 31).

TAKE A WATERFRONT WALK: Before the Shinnecock Canal opened in 1892, vessels traveling from Peconic Bay to Shinnecock Bay — and the Atlantic Ocean beyond — had to circumnavigate Montauk Point. The canal not only created a shortcut, it created miles of new waterfront for fishing, boating and dining. Leave your car at **Maritime Park** (on Newtown Road just north of Montauk Highway) to access a walkway along the canal from which you can see the locks, four sets of gates whose opening and closing are determined by the tide. There's also a covered pavilion there for picnicking.

GO FOR A RIDE: Cycling enthusiasts might consider taking the LIRR to Hampton Bays and then renting a bike for the day at the **Local Bike Shop**, just steps away from the train. Without a car to park, all of the local beaches are free to access. (With a car, **Ponquogue** and **Tiana** beaches, both on Dune Road, cost \$30 a day for nonresidents through Labor Day; **Meschutt Beach**, where the east bank of the canal meets Peconic Bay, costs \$18). It's also a short ride to **Munn's Pond County Park**, offering several forested hiking trails. It's also the home of the **Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center**, where injured animals are nursed back to health. Red-tailed hawks, Eastern screech owls, peregrine falcons and red foxes might be some of the patients. Allen McButterpants, a woodchuck with balance problems, was deemed incapable of being returned to the wild and has now become a permanent resident.