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## Restaurants & Culinary Adventures of Virginia's Eastern Shore

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*In part one of his series on Virginia's Eastern Shore, David Latt highlighted four summer experiences unique to the narrow peninsula. ([Click here](#) to view related article.)*

*Part two concludes his look with some equally off-the-beaten path Eastern Shore restaurants and culinary adventures.*

### Virginia's Eastern Shore: Part 2

At the end of the 19th century, William H. Scott had a vision of Virginia's Eastern Shore as the bread-basket for the urban centers of the East Coast. Clearing the land, he created huge "truck farms" which thrived on the rich soil. Railroad cars full of produce traveled out of Cape Charles on barges to processing plants on the mainland. This was early industrial farming and the farms of the Eastern Shore provided a welcome source of fresh produce for the expanding populations in the great urban centers in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Boston and New York.

While farmland still covers the flatlands of the peninsula, there are only a few farm stands and virtually no farmers markets.



### Cape Charles

Across from the [Bay Creek Marina](#), the casual restaurant and bar [Aqua](#) looks out on the Chesapeake Bay.

The chef transforms produce from local waters and nearby farms into daily specials like she crab soup, shrimp and scallop pot pie. The clams on the half shell are from an aqua farm down the block.

**Insider's tip:** If you are hungry for crab cakes but arrive when crabs aren't in season, try the clam cakes or fritters. They are delicious.

**Kelly's Gingernut Pub** transformed a once-decrepit downtown bank into a cozy bar-restaurant. It's an off-season neighborhood hangout with weekly musical acts.

The food gets mixed reviews, but locals stick to the duck special, the soft-shell crab sliders, the oyster sampler and the maple crème brûlée.

### Route 13

Traveling along the Route 13, the main north-south highway on the shore, brings you to the casual roadside spots.

About 20 miles north of Cape Charles is [The Great Machipongo Clam Shack](#), a seafood market and restaurant.



oysters, shrimp, seasoned fish fillets, crab cakes, and mesh bags of live little necks and larger top necks clams.

Try to visit on Saturday night for no-charge, music night. Jean Mariner, the co-owner with her husband Roger, explains the restaurant's philosophy, "We try to pull in everything local: seafood, musicians, everything."



### Mappsville

[Metompkin Seafood](#) is another family-run spot for fried seafood. The seafood market and restaurant doesn't have seating inside, but there are picnic tables in front of the store.

Ellen Hudgins will take your order and her husband J.C. will cook it up. All the seafood is fresh and local except for the catfish and shrimp. They're from the Carolinas. Fries, cole slaw and hush puppies complete a plate. Everything served at Metompkin Seafood is made to order.

## Chincoteague Island

On the seaside of the peninsula, just below Delaware, Chincoteague is the largest town in the shore and one of the most popular vacation destinations, especially in the summer. It takes some practice to pronounce “Chincoteague,” but it’s worth the effort. The narrow island has lots of honky-tonk fun things to eat and do.

Stop at the [Chincoteague Inn Restaurant](#) on the wharf for a drink. With a horseshoe-shaped bar facing the water, the food isn’t remarkable, but the view is exceptional. Locals crowd the bar before sun set and then stay through until the nighttime craziness begins.



At **Little Bay Seafood Market**, the shellfish and seafood are so fresh and local that there are no prices listed. Prices depend on what the fishermen caught that day and how much of it there was. If you rent a place with a kitchen, save money and cook up the catch of the day. Or you can even go clamming and have clams for dinner. With seafood this fresh, all you have to do is cook the clams in a hot chefs pan with a little olive oil, chopped garlic, Italian parsley, a few red pepper flakes, a pat of sweet butter and a quarter cup of water. Put on a high flame, cover, wait 10 minutes and add cooked pasta. Have dinner and a glass of wine outside and watch the sun go down.

If you don’t want to cook and the weather is good, spend time at [Woody’s Beach BBQ](#), north of the Maddox Road roundabout. Woody’s sets up camp during the summer by using food trailers for kitchens and creating an outdoor dining room with picnic table.

End your visit, at [Island Creamery](#), where the homemade ice cream is fresh tasting and full of natural flavor. While you are enjoying your ice cream on Island Creamery wooden deck, you’ll be treated to the attentions of the resident duck who calmly waits to pick up any tasty morsels that fall to the deck.

Beware that ducks and geese rule the island. They cross the street without regard to traffic and honk at customers in the parking lot.

*By David Latt for PeterGreenberg.com. Visit David on the Web at [MenWhoLiketoCook.com](#).*