

THE MIGHTY LOBSTER ROLL

The changing taste of an old seaside classic

Should it be served hot or cold? With mayonnaise (but not too much!) or steamed in the raw and doused in hot butter? Does it come with a side of fries or coleslaw? How about the Diablo? Wait, what? Summer is here so let the lobster roll debate begin again...

It's hard to begin that debate without first mentioning *the* Lobster Roll. The restaurant, that is, which opened on Montauk Highway in Napeague for the summer of 1965 and is largely credited with launching the craze of stuffing succulent chunks of lobster meat — either hot or cold — into a toasted hot dog bun on the Eastern End of Long Island.

The cocktail party conversation over what makes up a true lobster roll never grows old. The dish is said to have originated at a restaurant named Perry's in Milford, Connecticut, as early as 1929, according to the "Encyclopedia of American Food and Drink" by John Mariani. For those residing in Connecticut, Maine and most other parts of New England, a lobster roll served warm is simply called a "lobster roll" while the one served cold is referred to as a

THE REAL DEAL:
Hot steamed lobster right from the shell in Ogunquit, Maine.



WHERE IT STARTED HERE:

The Lobster Roll restaurant, or "Lunch," in Napeague.

"lobster salad roll," which was most prevalent on the East End until a shifting of tastes prompted the hot variety to sprout up at local eateries.

But as you munch away on that mini lobster roll everyone is passing at weddings these days, also chew on this: When Red Hook Lobster Pound opened an outlet in Montauk a few years back, it brought along the notion of serving multiple types of lobster rolls at the same establishment. What they call the Maine Lobster Roll is served cold with mayo (never mind that most establishments in Maine serve meat shelled right from the steamer, topped with melted butter), the Connecticut roll is served warm with butter, and there's also a BLT Lobster Roll, a Tuscan Lobster Roll and, because this is summer in the Hamptons, lighter options like Lobster Citrus Salad and Lobster Lettuce Wraps.

Opening this summer in Southampton is the Shinnecock Lobster Factory featuring six — yes, six — different types of lobster rolls from classic to Cajun, and even a "Hamptons" that is served warm with butter. Confused yet?

With all this swirling change there now seems to be some pushback from local chefs against the classic lobster roll, whatever you think that might be. Three of Sag Harbor's favorite Main Street lunch spots — Page @63 Main, The American Hotel and the recently-opened Lulu Kitchen — all serve lobster salad, in one form or another, as a sandwich! Huh? Let the debate begin.

