

Wellfleet bite-size attraction, big taste

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Joan Cobb, left, and Barbara Cantor savor their first oysters of the day as the Wellfleet OysterFest kicked off Saturday on Main Street. The annual event highlights the town's shellfishing tradition with arts and crafts, children's activities, live music and an oyster-shucking contest.

Cape Cod Times/Steve Heaslip

 By [Mary Ann Bragg](#)

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WELLFLEET – The dinghy display full of local fish – spiny dogfish, haddock, skate, sea scallops, starfish, whiting and more – drew a steady stream of attention Saturday afternoon at the Wellfleet OysterFest.

Perhaps no one's face lit up more, though, than Brewster third-grader Tyler Ritchie, 8, as he peeked past the adults to get a good look at the hands-on, iced exhibition of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association.

The OysterFest is a two-day street fair, usually held the weekend after Columbus Day, that highlights Wellfleet's shellfishing traditions with food, arts and crafts, children's activities, educational exhibits, live music, an oyster shucking contest, and more.

An estimated 10,000 people attended the event Saturday, OysterFest spokeswoman Nancy Civetta said.

"That smells disgusting," Tyler said to his dad, Russ, his first reaction to the fish exhibition smack in the middle of a long row of displays and booths along Main Street. It seemed as if Tyler might walk away, in search of pizza or popcorn or some other snack. But then the truth came out.

"He's going to be a fisherman," Russ Ritchie said quietly, as an aside, as Tyler dove right with questions and comments, asking the association's presenter, Tom Dempsey, about the two skate flopped on either end of the dinghy, the sea scallop and the red crab.

Tyler, it seems, inherited the fishing knack, to say the least. He's caught about 20 striped bass keepers, three bluefish and plenty more snappers.

"I started when I was four," Tyler said.

Tyler's dad, whose parents were from Nova Scotia, fished five days a week as a young teen. Now, together, Tyler and Russ fish off the Wellfleet pier and near Race Point Light in Provincetown. They first started out on the flats of Cape Cod Bay in Brewster.

"What's that right there?" Tyler asked Dempsey.

Tyler listened to the answer, then jumped ahead with comments about a recent lobster boat trip out of Chatham with his mom, Suzie. They'd seen something amazing: whales and tuna.

Dempsey, whose fishing association is based in Chatham, laughed and said he'd already heard about that lobster trip.

Tyler's plans for the future: "sell fish to markets."

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- Where: Main Street
- When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. today
- Cost: Free entry
- Oyster "Shuck-off" Finals at 3 p.m.
- Information online:

www.wellfleetoysterfest.org/

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