



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEA CHANTY MEETS BLUEGRASS? TRY TENNESSEE SHRIMP

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Scientists tell us that the area now known as Tennessee was once covered in water, inhabited by all manner of sea creatures now forever ensconced as fossils in the limestone from Memphis to Bristol.

What goes around comes around.

The sea creatures are back – at least on the farms across the state where shrimp farming is joining more traditional methods of food production. Technically, the little crustaceans are freshwater prawns, but our tastebuds understand that what we're talking about here is shrimp.

Tennessee farmers first plunged into the freshwater prawn business in the 1990's. Prawn pioneers faced raising a crop they'd never even heard of, and worse, that the public had never heard of, either.

Nevertheless, prawns can now be found in each grand division of the state, and for producers like Ann Birdwell, who owns and operates Still Hollow Farm near Greeneville, the prawn harvest is just one more fun thing to attract visitors to their farm during the fall. The farm also produces sweet corn, flowers, and sheep.

"Still Hollow also has direct access to the Nolichucky River, with areas beside the water for parking to unload your canoe or kayak," says Ann Birdwell. "We also have a gift shop, 'The Farmer's Wife,' located in the farm's 150 year old granary, which features wrought iron decor. Come for the shrimp harvest, then make a day of it so you can enjoy the whole farm!" Visit www.stillhollowfarm.com for harvest dates and hours of operation.

Prawn producers have found that the best way to bring prawns and customers together is during their harvest time, which is late September. Some producers have cars lined up waiting to get to the ponds, where they can watch the harvesting take place. There's a sense of anticipation, because nobody really knows how many or how big the prawns will be until the nets are thrown and the prawns are exposed.

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Of course, if you're right there at the pond, you also get the benefit of the freshest prawns at a direct-from-the-farm price. Just be sure you call ahead before heading out to a prawn farm so you'll know exactly when the harvest is happening and that there are prawns available.

Prawns are raised in controlled, chemical-free manmade ponds. Tiny "seed" prawns are placed in the carefully tended ponds in May and then harvested in late September when the ponds are drained. Mature prawns are very large, up to 8 and even 4 to the pound, a result of being grown in a pampered environment with high quality feed.

Prawns are completely interchangeable with marine shrimp in recipes, with some culinary and nutritional benefits. Taste tests have shown that prawns actually have a more favorable taste than marine shrimp and have been compared to the sweet flavor and meaty texture of lobster. Prawns also have particularly hard shells, which create a more flavorful stock. They freeze well and have no "mud vein" to be removed, so preparation is also simpler than for saltwater shrimp.

For more information on the nutrition, storage and handling of prawns or for more information about prawn producers, visit www.picktnproducts.org.

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BARBECUED PRAWNS WITH FRESH CORN RELISH

1/2 cup sour cream
1/2 teaspoon hot sauce
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
3 cups fresh corn kernels, cooked
1 small red onion, diced
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely diced
2 plum tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
3/4 cup olive oil, divided
1 tablespoon chopped cilantro
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
18 prawns
1/2 cup barbecue sauce
6 cups mesclun greens

Combine sour cream, hot sauce and lime juice in a small bowl then set aside. In a separate bowl, toss together corn, onion, jalapeno, tomatoes, vinegar, olive oil minus 2 tablespoons and cilantro. Season to taste with salt and pepper, then set aside.

Skewer the length of the prawns on skewer. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Brush with remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil. Place on hot grill for 30 seconds. Brush with barbecue sauce and grill for 30 seconds longer. Turn prawns over and brush with more barbecue sauce. Grill for 1 minute. Remove prawns from grill and cool slightly.

To serve, toss mesclun greens with some of the liquid from corn relish. Place a mound of green in center of each plate. Arrange prawns over lettuce. Spoon corn relish in a band across prawns and drizzle with dressing. Serve immediately. Yield: 6 servings.