



A TASTE OF THE NORTHERN NECK

Find old favorites and new foodie destinations along the Chesapeake Bay / *By Megan Wilson*

Chefs from around the world have made their home in Virginia's Northern Neck. Some were born and raised here on the shores of the local waterways; they learned their craft from generations of watermen before them. Whether they're transplants or fifth-generation locals, they each blend their cultures and traditions together to honor and praise a tiny mollusk known as the oyster.

Restaurants, museums and other hands-on experiences illuminate the history of the oyster here. With each slurp, a visit can bring you closer to the sands of time. Start by letting a waterman lead the way.



The Dog and Oyster Vineyard

Get schooled

For more of a foodie approach to your visit, reserve a spot during an **Oyster Academy**, which leaves from either **The Tides Inn** (tidesinn.com) in Irvington, or the **Urbanna Seafood Market & Raw Bar** (urbannarawbar.com) on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays in the fall. You'll not only learn the waterways, you'll also learn from a local chef how to prepare oysters.

Once you're back on shore, settle into a room in a former elite boarding school at **The Hope & Glory Inn** (hopeandglory.com). The entire property in Irvington plays on this 1800 schoolhouse past. The spa is called Recess, the bar is named Detention and the farm-to-table restaurant is known as the Dining Hall. You can rest easy in your own cottage or stay in one of the rooms in the main house. When it's time to eat, head down the road.



Shrimp and grits from Adrift

Go to the dogs

The Dog and Oyster Vineyard in Irvington invites guests to take a trip through its giant corkscrews and into the midst of its grapevines, which are responsible for a list of award-winning wines. Pair them with local oysters at the vineyard's **Sip & Slurp** stand. Keep an eye open for friendly dogs wandering the grounds. Owner Dudley Patteson, who also owns The Hope & Glory Inn, has rescued each one and brought them home to watch over his grapes.

What's new

New foodie destinations in the area include **Adrift** (adriftva.com) in Whitestone and **Dredge Bar & Restaurant** (dredgeirvingtonva.com) in Irvington. Local Devin Rose opened Adrift in 2018 and has received accolades from near and far for its approachable, yet ever-changing seafood-heavy menu. Dredge opened in early 2019. Chef Brian Byrd gained a local following via his traveling food truck. He grew up in the area, learning about local oysters and seafood from his stepfather, who was a third-generation waterman. Byrd spent five years in Key West, where he learned to cook up fresh, creative seafood with a Caribbean spin. He's bringing dishes like spicy soft shell crab tacos to a sit-down experience worthy of the flavor.



ADRIFT IN TIME

Climb aboard a deadrise boat for a **Watermen's Heritage Tour** (watermentours.com). Working watermen will serve as your guides to the Chesapeake Bay. They lead you to their favorite spots to enjoy the wild-life and bring home the catch of the day.

Save the DATE

SECOND FRIDAYS: Colonial Beach stages an art walk from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on second Fridays, featuring works by local artists. Visit Colonial Beach Artists Guild on Facebook for details. facebook.com/ColonialBeachArtistsGuild

From top: courtesy Adrift; courtesy The Dog and Oyster Vineyard; courtesy Watermen's Heritage Tours