

Long Island Dining | Clambakes Lobster and Corn, on the Beach, or Off



Photo: Gordon M. Grant for The New York Times

SETTING For Niklas de la Motte and Lilly Schonwald’s wedding rehearsal dinner, the Hamptons Clambake and Catering Company served about 100 guests at Sagaponack Beach in Sagaponack.

By SUSAN M. NOVICK
Published: July 20, 2012

Navigating the logistics of a clambake on a public beach can be challenging. Local towns regulate hours, access, amplified music and alcohol; and high tides, other beach visitors and piping-plover conservation measures can alter party plans. Clambake caterers can help expedite permits and interpret regulations for public beaches; permit fees add to the cost of the event.

For the recent wedding rehearsal dinner of Niklas de la Motte and Lilly Schonwald, the [Hampton Clambake and Catering Company](#) drove a full kitchen trailer onto a public beach, Sagg Main in Sagaponack. About 100 guests mingled as torches and bonfires illuminated the surf; a vivid sunset colored the white tablecloths dusky pink. The caterers' trailer had a pop-up preparation tent and a line of barbecue grills and propane-heated pots.

“Clambakes have been going on for 100 years,” said Eric Miller, 54, who, with his business partner, Jeffrey Hiller, owns Hampton Clambake as well as the catering company Food and Company and the Millers B.B.Q., a caterer and retail shop, both in East Hampton. “But this modern version,” Mr. Miller said, “where a chef is upgrading the food and we’re bringing the whole kitchen onto the beach, is new.”

He and Mr. Hiller bought the clambake company in 2010 from the original owner, who started it in 1999.

“We drive on the beach at 6 o’clock. By 7:30, we’ve got a beautiful party. By 11:05 you won’t even know we were here,” said Marc Miller, 56, Eric’s brother and the company’s director of special events. He said he expected the company to cater nearly 100 clambakes this season.

At the Sagg Main Beach event, the long buffet table on the beach was arranged with platters of food. Guests left their shoes by the entrance and walked barefoot on the sand before filling dinner plates and settling on blankets or chairs.

One guest, Joanie Goldstein of St. Louis, had never been to a clambake before.

“I am thrilled,” she said, “because I am sitting in the sand in a white dress on a candlelit beach on a gorgeous evening, with the moon up there and a lobster in front of me. Lobster is my favorite food.”

No Matter What the Weather

These are among the companies that cater clambakes on Long Island. Prices below include paper goods but exclude beverages; arrangements for bar service vary by company.

EAST HAMPTON Hampton Clambake and Catering Company, 283 Pantigo Road; (631) 324-8620 or hamptonclambake.com.

Catered clambakes, \$70 to \$90 per person, plus labor, tax and 20 percent gratuity. The labor cost for a 50-person clambake would typically run about \$1,000 (a staff of six for five hours). During high season, there is a 25-person minimum.

For \$70 per person, the deluxe clambake menu includes guacamole and salsa and chips, steamed mussels and clams, a seared tuna appetizer, a pound-and-a-quarter lobster, grilled chicken, corn, smashed potatoes and strawberry shortcake.

Retail take-out and catering at the Millers B.B.Q. and at Food & Co., 283 Pantigo Road, East Hampton; (631) 329-1000. themillersbbq.net; foodandco.com.