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Welcome old favorites from New England Series: the nibbler [CITY Edition]

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The hottest export from New England isn't Patriots, tea parties, Democrats or even rotisserie chicken. As any transplanted New Englander within complaining range will tell you, it's seafood.

Not any seafood and certainly not Florida seafood, but cold-water species of scallops, haddock, cod (three syllables) and most of all, clams, the big-bellied Ipswich variety.

Bringing the beloved clams to such distant shores as ours requires special effort (call it the Beantown connection), and those few places here that do draw a loyal crowd.

Newest purveyor, named appropriately the Casual Clam (3336 M.L. King (Ninth) St. N, St. Petersburg), serves 'em by the bushel steamed, chowdered, and, of course, fried (in dinners, half-pints and the rolls that HoJo made infamous). Owner Paul Zareas and manager Randy Downing used to eat and cook such fare regularly in New Hampshire and have found plenty of compatriots here in the two months they've been open.

On Sundays, you'll hear plenty of "pahking the cah," and you can guess what game they've got tuned in. The more important New England accent is on the food. My clams, steamed littlenecks (\$4.95 a dozen) and fried Ipswich (\$7.95) for a dinner, were remarkably fresh and light. And that includes the frying; these Yankees are deep-fried, too - and proud of it.

Rightly so. From what the Nibbler tasted, the breading was surprisingly crisp and almost light. I also had haddock (\$7.95), a big slab of it, which I ordered blackened; untraditional, but successful. Side dishes went a bit beyond the fried and true, including corn on the cob, new potatoes and rice pilafs.

Although New England seafood is the main catch, the Clam happily cooks up Florida grouper and shrimp and the ubiquitous wings, burgers and salads. There's also an outdoor dining-drinking area. It's a small, welcome addition to the Allendale-Woodlawn neighborhood.

In a word, cheers. Waves of change

Change is the natural cycle of a beach, but there's more erosion and replenishment this season than the Nibbler knew. Musta been a whale of a storm:

Pete Reynard's, that unsinkable floating island of Continental food in Holmes Beach, is now Shuckers' Dockside Grill (5325 Marina Drive, 778-2233). The same folks are running it as before (they took over from the Reynard family five years ago), but this year they've obviously made it more casual, with more seafood. Kitchen's open from 11:30 a.m. to midnight and there's still a \$6.95 champagne brunch on Sundays.

Up north there's more than wildlife nibbling along the shores of the Weeki Wachee River. Menu at Otter's (5386 Darlene St., Spring Hill; (904) 597-9551), formerly the Redfish, ranges from half-pound burgers to seafood; dinners run \$8.95 to \$16.95.

You'll find ghosts of the old Ringside and bar favorites at the Chart Room (6712 Gulf Blvd., St. Petersburg Beach; 367-9338). Linda Bernard has taken over the place and installed black beans, swamp cabbage soup, pumpernickel loaf with