FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 17, 2026

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Houston Shrimp Investigation Finds Imports on 64% of Sampled Plates

SeaD Consulting reports 45% of 22 restaurants in the Loop 610 area explicitly misrepresented imported shrimp as local wild-caught or Gulf

HOUSTON, TX — A new SeaD Consulting investigation using genetic testing of shrimp served on the plate at 22 Houston restaurants in the 610 Loop area were found that **64 percent served imported shrimp**, according to findings provided by the company. More troubling for consumers and Texas shrimpers, SeaD reports that **45 percent of the sampled restaurants explicitly represented imported shrimp as local wild-caught or Gulf shrimp**. The sample included high-end restaurants.

Houston investigation findings

- 22 restaurants were sampled and tested in the Houston's 610 Loop area
- 64 percent served shrimp SeaD identified as Imported/Farm-raised shrimp (14 out of 22)
- 45 percent of sampled restaurants explicitly misrepresented imported shrimp as local, American wild-caught or Gulf, according to SeaD (10 out of 22).
- 36 percent (8/22) served American wild-caught shrimp
- 18 percent (4/22) verbalized Imported shrimp

These percentages describe the restaurants sampled, not all Houston restaurants. Serving imported shrimp is distinct from misrepresenting its origin. 71 percent of restaurants serving Imported/Farm-raised shrimp (10 out of 14) explicitly misrepresented imported shrimp as local, American wild-caught or Gulf.

Misrepresentation persists after Texas law takes effect

Senate Bill 823, effective September 1, 2025, prohibits restaurants from labeling or representing imported shrimp as Texas, American, domestic, or Gulf shrimp. It also requires suppliers, wholesalers, and distributors selling shrimp in Texas to provide a clear and conspicuous label stating whether it is imported. The law authorizes administrative penalties by qualifying state and local permitting authorities and provides a good-faith affirmative defense. SeaD's findings raise concerns about potential violations and enforcement measures.

Shrimpers call for enforcement before more boats disappear

Tricia Kimball of the Port Arthur Area Shrimpers Association said, "We fought for a law that would help consumers make an honest choice, and it is upsetting to see these findings with that law already in place. Our shrimping families are on their last legs. A law on paper cannot save a boat or a livelihood if no one enforces it. We need real accountability so the people harvesting American shrimp have a fair chance to survive."

Chris Londrie of the Texas Shrimp Association said, "Texas shrimpers are working hard to bring wild-caught shrimp to market, yet imported shrimp is still being sold under the Gulf name. That is infuriating. America has lost more than half our shrimpers in just a few years to unfairly traded imports, and every sale built on a false claim takes another opportunity away from our fleet." He added, "Consumers want local shrimp and they should get it. We are working with state and federal legislators to establish resources to stop the mislabeling that is taking advantage of U.S. shrimpers with foreign substitution of product."

A choice consumers deserve to make

For Houston diners, the question is straightforward: Would you choose shrimp raised in ponds halfway around the world, or the wild-caught bounty right out our back door in the Gulf? Consumers should be able to make that choice with accurate information. Restaurants can support that choice by verifying sourcing, keeping purchase records, and ensuring that menu descriptions and staff statements match the shrimp actually served.

Southern Shrimp Alliance Executive Director Blake Price said, "We continue to beat the drum for honest seafood labeling, so consumers get what they pay for and are not misled. When someone chooses American wild-caught shrimp, that choice should be honored.

Testing helps expose the gap between the promise and the plate; meaningful enforcement is what will help close it."

Public health and legislative cooperation

SeaD will be sharing the full data with Houston Public Health for further investigation.

The findings underscore the need for accurate sourcing information throughout the supply chain, verification at the restaurant level, and coordination among legislators, regulators, and industry. Diners can ask whether shrimp is U.S. wild-caught and request a clear answer about its origin before ordering.

Restaurants Tested That Were Found To Be Authentically Serving U.S. Wild-Caught Shrimp

1. BB's Tex-Orleans The Heights — 2710 White Oak Drive, Houston 77007
2. Christies Seafood and Steak — 6029 Westheimer Rd, Houston 77057
3. Goode Co. Kitchen and Cantina — 1801 Yale Street, Houston 77008
4. Niko Niko's Greek and American Cafe — 2520 Montrose Blvd, Houston 77002
5. Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen — 6015 Westheimer, Houston 77057
6. Ragin Cajun Richmond — 4302 Richmond Ave, Houston 77027
7. The Boot Cajun Bon Temps — 1206 W 20th St, Houston 77008
8. The Original Ninfa's — 2704 Navigation Blvd, Houston 77003

This list celebrates restaurants found to be using American-caught shrimp. This is not a complete list of area restaurants that use U.S. wild-caught shrimp. The test results are released to show the magnitude of mislabeling and to remind consumers to question the source of shrimp at restaurants, not to document the sourcing of all area restaurants.

About Southern Shrimp Alliance

The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) is an organization of shrimp fishermen, shrimp processors, and other members of the domestic industry in the eight warmwater shrimp-producing states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas. SSA has funded SEAD Consulting's genetic testing at restaurants throughout their region. The list of restaurants found to be serving American wild caught shrimp in the samples taken by market can be seen here.

About SeaD Consulting

SeaD (Seafood Development) Consulting works with diverse stakeholders—seafood producers, academia, governmental agencies, and environmental organizations—to foster innovation and sustainability throughout the sector, bridging commercial fishery science with testing and processing technologies to combat seafood mislabeling and substitution. They currently hold the patent, in partnership with Florida State University, for the portable rapid ID high-accuracy genetic test RIGHTTest®, being used in a multi-state study to determine shrimp species being served at seafood restaurants. For more information about the investigation and how you can support ethical seafood sourcing, please visit www.seadconsulting.com.

Disclaimer: SeaD's testing and reporting is intended to be used as an investigatory tool to assist the industry's fight against seafood mislabeling and is not intended for use in any legal proceedings, nor may SeaD's data, testing, or reporting be used in any legal proceeding without the express written authorization of SeaD.

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