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3/3/25

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(Note this [Media Kit](#) for photos, videos, report, SMEs)

Savannah Shrimp Scandal: 77% of Perceived Local Shrimp Being Served in Restaurants are Foreign Imports

Savannah, GA – March 3, 2025 – One of the Deep South's most historic cities has become the unexpected focus of a growing concern: shrimp fraud. Known for Southern hospitality and low country seafood culture, Savannah finds itself facing a troubling surge in deceptive practices, as shrimp lovers struggle to trust what's on their plates.

From February 18-23, 2025, SEAD Consulting, hired by the Southern Shrimp Alliance, genetically tested 44 restaurant dishes in the Savannah area to determine whether they were serving local Georgia wild-caught shrimp (as implied or advertised) or farm-raised imported shrimp. The company used the Rapid ID Genetic High-Accuracy Test ([RIGHTTest™](#)) to perform the testing.

The results showed that of the 44 restaurants, 34 were selling non-local shrimp. Meaning that only 10 were serving authentic domestic wild-catch fare. Ultimately, diners in Savannah have less than one in four chances of having fresh shrimp out of their coastal backyard.

Local Wild-Caught Imagery and Location Sells

"Consumers--including millions of Georgia's tourists--want the superior flavor and texture of wild-caught shrimp harvested by a sustainable, well-managed local fishery. Restaurants know that, and use the culture and imagery of local shrimpers when selling a farm-raised shrimp raised halfway around the world on processed feed, pesticides, fungicides, and possibly banned antibiotics," explains John Williams, executive director of the [Southern Shrimp Alliance](#).

"I have spent many years distinguishing wild Georgia shrimp from farm-raised imports, working with our tourism boards to promote Georgia's premium seafood and rich culture. Yet, none of that work is worth anything if restaurants mislead consumers through false advertising,"

states [John Wallace](#), owner of Anchor Shrimp Co., a leading supplier of wild Georgia shrimp to Savannah and the Georgia coast. "We thank Georgia Representative Jesse Petrea for sponsoring and Representatives Buddy DeLoach, Lehman Franklin, Rick Townsend, and Al Williams for co-sponsoring legislation to mandate restaurant labeling that allows consumers to make an informed decision when ordering shrimp."

New Law In the Works to Stop Deception

That legislation in the works is [House Bill 117](#) which would require all restaurants in Georgia that serve imported foreign shrimp to disclose that fact on their menus or in publicly-visible locations. Sponsor of the Bill, [Representative Jesse Petrea](#) states, "HB 117 simply provides transparency for consumers by requiring restaurant menus to indicate when shrimp are imported. Imported shrimp do not meet domestic standards and are inspected only 0.7% of the time. Consumers have a right to know what they are eating and feeding their family."

Shrimpers Want Genetic Testing Used for Enforcement of Laws

The RIGHTTest was designed to be inexpensive, portable and provides a two-hour genetic identification of shrimp species to enable ease of use in the field for enforcement. President of the [Georgia Commercial Fisherman's Association](#) (GCFA), Paige Morrison, has been working with lawmakers for a while to get HB 117 passed, in hopes of it leading to testing and enforcement at restaurants. She says, "GCFA has long supported seafood species identification at the restaurant level, a stance reinforced by recent findings in Savannah that confirm longstanding suspicions. The concern that local shrimpers are being pushed out of the market due to mislabeling is now a proven reality. The RIGHTTest serves as a crucial tool in addressing the challenges faced by domestic fishermen. The GCFA is grateful for the dedication SeaD Consulting has shown – not only to our fishing community, but to Georgia consumers."

Bryan Jones, Director of [United States Shrimpers Coalition](#) talks about the way forward as a unified front and said, "The United States shrimping industry understands that protecting our legacy requires an 'all hands-on deck' approach. We deeply appreciate the tireless efforts of our shrimpers, especially those in the vital low country, the crucial testing provided by SeaD Consulting and advocacy from industry partners like Southern Shrimp Alliance, as well as the support of lawmakers like Georgia State Representative Jesse Petrea. By working together, we're building a united front to safeguard our industry and consumers' health. This collaboration provides consumers with the information they need to make intentional decisions about their seafood, ensuring they can enjoy the freshest, highest-quality shrimp while directly supporting American fishermen and the communities they sustain."

Supporting Restaurants Who Support Georgia Shrimpers

Following are the 10 restaurants out of 44 sampled in the Savannah area found to be serving wild-caught local Georgia shrimp as advertised or implied:

1. Belford's Seafood and Steaks, 315 West St. Julian Street, Savannah, GA 31401
2. Boar's Head Grill & Tavern, 1 North Lincoln Street, Savannah, GA 31401
3. Coastal 15, 102 W Bay St, Savannah, GA 31401
4. Fiddler's Crab House & Oyster Bar, 131 West River Street, Savannah, GA 31401
5. Love's Seafood & Steak, 6817 Chief O.F. Love Road, Savannah, GA 31419
6. The Olde Pink House, 23 Abercorn Street, Savannah, GA 31401
7. Pier 16, 1601 Inlet Ave, Tybee Island, GA 31328
8. Rhett, 412 Williamson Street, Savannah, GA 31401

9. Sea Wolf, 106 S Campbell Ave, Tybee Island, GA 31328
10. Wood's Seafood, 711 GA-30, Port Wentworth, GA 31407

The 34 restaurants found to not be authentic are being sent letters from SEAD Consulting and the Southern Shrimp Alliance to make them aware of the findings. Restaurants will be encouraged to either sell the local wild-caught shrimp being implied or advertised or prominently display on menus or on signage the country of origin of the shrimp, per the new legislation being proposed in Georgia. Genetic retesting of the market and the misleading restaurants is likely.

What Consumers and Restaurants Can Do Now

Until laws and enforcement are in place, Savannah's residents and visitors are urged to stay vigilant and ask for the country of origin of shrimp when served at restaurants, and if in doubt, demand proof of local sourcing by asking to see the box the shrimp came in. Restaurants are being asked to continue to honor the legacy of the South's culinary traditions and support local shrimp communities by serving domestic product, or at the very least, make consumers aware of what they are consuming.

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 in the Biloxi, MS area, Galveston and Kemah, TX, and in Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL, with more market testing to come. The list of restaurants found to be serving Gulf shrimp in the samples taken by market can be found [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 fraud. They currently hold the patent, in partnership with Florida State University, for 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 or contact us at sead@seadconsulting.com. Consumers are also encouraged to contact SeaD Consulting <https://www.seadconsulting.com/contact-us> to report suspected fraud in their area. #SEADConsulting

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