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Follow-Up Testing Shows Progress—but Seafood Deception Persists on Mississippi Gulf Coast

More Biloxi restaurants betting on American Wild Caught Shrimp to attract diners

Biloxi, MS – A new round of genetic testing conducted in April 2026 using the [RIGHTTest™](#) reveals meaningful progress in the fight against restaurant menu mislabeling along the Mississippi Gulf Coast—but also confirms that deceptive practices continue to undermine consumer trust and harm American shrimpers.

This follow-up investigation builds on SeaD Consulting's landmark December 2024 report, which exposed widespread shrimp mislabeling in Biloxi and surrounding coastal communities. At that time, **82% of restaurants tested were potentially misleading customers**, often substituting imported shrimp while marketing dishes as local Gulf shrimp. Last year, 44 randomly selected seafood restaurants were sampled and tested. This year, half of the previously tested restaurants, 22, were randomly selected to get a snapshot of mislabeling status since the initial study.

Significant Improvement Since 2024

The latest findings show that increased awareness, public pressure, and assistance from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR), along with SeaD's continued testing are driving change:

- **64% of restaurants (14 of 22)** are now serving **American Wild-Caught (AWC) shrimp (up from 18% in 2024)**
- **9 of 14** were consistently serving authentic shrimp across both testing periods.

- **5 of 14** corrected previous mislabeling practices and are now serving AWC shrimp.

“This data shows that transparency efforts are making an impact,” said **Erin Williams, COO and Founder of SeaD Consulting**. “More restaurants are doing the right thing—but there is still work to be done.”

Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Joe Spraggins said, “We are pleased to see the marked improvement in the number of restaurants in the area that are providing correct and honest labeling. We have been working with Mississippi legislators to introduce regulations and new legislation (HB 1466) was signed by Governor Reeves to give restaurants and businesses multiple ways to comply. We will implement the new legislation starting July 1, 2026.”

Inauthenticity Still Exists in about 1 in 4 Restaurants

Despite progress, seafood mislabeling remains a serious issue:

- **36% of restaurants (8 of 22)** were found to be serving imported/farm-raised shrimp.
- Of those:
 - **63% (5 of 8)** misled customers by indicating the shrimp were local or wild-caught, either by menu labeling or staff assurances
 - Only **37% (3 of 8)** were transparent about serving imported/farm-raised products

Notably:

- **Three restaurants misrepresented shrimp in both testing periods**
- Some establishments showed inconsistent practices between the two rounds. Of the 8 restaurants serving imported/farm-raised shrimp, 3 accurately disclosed it at some point—though only 1 did so consistently across both testing periods—while 5 misrepresented their shrimp as American wild-caught. Of note, some restaurants that initially disclosed correctly failed to do so upon retesting, highlighting the **inconsistency in labeling practices**.
- In the testing area, **Royal Red shrimp** were also found to be falsely marketed, substituting imported Argentine shrimp while assuring customers it was local.

High-Value Shrimp Still Vulnerable to Mislabeling Deception

While overall inauthenticity rates have declined, premium products remain at risk. The 2024 investigation found that **92% of Royal Red shrimp dishes were mislabeled**, and the 2026 follow-up confirms that substitution of imported alternatives is still occurring in this high-value category. SeaD Consulting utilized the RIGHTTest™ to determine whether samples obtained were Royal Reds or Argentine Red Shrimp. In this market, **research**

revealed that 2/3 of the restaurant dishes described as Royal Red Shrimp were incorrectly labeled.

Economic and Industry Impact

Seafood mislabeling continues to threaten the livelihoods of Gulf Coast shrimpers while misleading consumers who are often paying premium prices for what they believe is local catch.

“Consumer sales that legitimately belong to U.S. shrimpers and their communities are ending up overseas. That’s not right. If a restaurant says it is a Gulf shrimp, it should never be a farm-raised shrimp from halfway around the world,” said **Leann Bosarge, Southern Shrimp Alliance Board Member and Head of New Business Development at Bosarge Boats in Pascagoula, MS**. “U.S. wild-caught shrimp are higher quality, better regulated, and simply taste better due to their natural diet and movement, so we hope labeling laws will be strongly enforced.”

Restaurants Leading the Way

Nine restaurants were confirmed to be serving authentic American wild-caught shrimp in both testing periods, demonstrating consistent integrity and transparency:

1. **Anthony's Under the Oaks** 1217 Washington Ave, Ocean Springs, MS 39564
2. **Bayview Café and Bar at IP** 850 Bayview Ave, Biloxi, MS 39530
3. **Catch 110** 110 Lameuse St, Biloxi, MS 39530
4. **Da Best Wings** 157 Hardy Court Shopping Ctr Rd, Gulfport, MS 39507
5. **Parrain's Cajun Cooking/ Parrain's Jambalaya Kitchen** 179 Reynoir St, Biloxi, MS 39530
6. **Patio 44** 124 Main St, Biloxi, MS 39530
7. **Phoenicia Gourmet Restaurant** 1108 Bienville Blvd, Ocean Springs, MS 39564
8. **Port City Café** 2561 Pass Rd Unit A, Biloxi, MS 39531
9. **Rouses #88** 2384 Pass Rd, Biloxi, MS 39531

Additionally, these five restaurants were also found to be serving authentic American wild-caught shrimp in the retest:

1. **Bacchus on the Bayou** 705 Bienville Blvd, Ocean Springs, MS 39564
2. **Buzzy's Breakfast Downtown** 1019 Desoto St, Ocean Springs, MS 39564
3. **Quality Poultry and Seafood** 895 Division St, Biloxi, MS 39533
4. **Shrimp Basket** 9265 US 49, Gulfport, MS 39503
5. **Under the Oak Café** 9380 Central Ave, D'Iberville, MS 39540

Shrimp Basket made a commitment to feature tail-on shrimp caught in Gulf waters in May 2025 after learning about SeaD Consulting's reports, coupled with consumer demand for authentic wild-caught product. "We want to deliver seafood that reflects the flavor and heritage of the Gulf Coast, which is what our customers expect from us. If we say it's Gulf Shrimp, you can bet we're serving it," said **Brand President of Shrimp Basket Jeff Brooks**. Customers at Shrimp Basket have a choice of eating imported/farm-raised shrimp or the more premium-priced wild-caught if preferred. "People deserve to know what they're eating and should receive what they're paying for," says Brooks. "We're committed to truth in menu labeling."

What Consumers Can Do

- **Ask questions** about where shrimp is sourced
- **Request proof** when seafood is marketed as local
- **Support restaurants** that demonstrate transparency
- **Advocate for enforcement** of seafood labeling laws

The Path Forward

While the improvement from **18% honest restaurants in 2024 to 64% who are serving authentic shrimp in 2026** marks significant progress, the persistence of deception underscores the need for stronger enforcement and continued oversight.

"Consumers deserve honesty, and Gulf Coast shrimpers deserve a fair marketplace," said **Williams**. "We've made progress—but until mislabeling on menus is eliminated, the work isn't done."

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 restaurant 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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