

ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS



Albemarle-Pamlico NEP • 919.733.5083 • h2o.enr.state.nc.us/nep • March 2001

ALBEMARLE-PAMLICO ESTUARY

The Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary is made up of six different sounds and ten major rivers. It includes the North Carolina Coast and a portion of the Virginia Coast. Most of the land in this area remains rural and people share similar lifestyles: farming, fishing, and logging. The estuary is one of the cradles of the ocean's harvest; more than 90 percent of the important species of fish depend on the estuary. And it is a beautiful place—sunrises here are spectacular.

FACTS ABOUT THE ESTUARY

- The estuary drains a 30,000 square mile area comprised of five major river basins.
- The population is approaching 2 million people.
- The estuary represents the region's key resource base through commercial fishing, tourism, recreation and resort development.
- Agriculture and forestry are major land use activities.
- Over \$2 billion is generated annually from tourism.
- More than 90 percent of all commercially important finfish and shellfish depend on the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary.
- Approximately one million recreational fishermen fish North Carolina coastal waters annually.

HEALTH OF THE ESTUARY

- Over 930 miles of freshwater rivers and streams are impaired mainly due to sediment, low dissolved oxygen levels and fish consumption advisories related to dioxin and mercury contamination.
- Most fish kill events appear to be related to low oxygen levels.
- Pfiesteria has been linked to a number of fish kills in the Neuse and Pamlico Estuaries.
- Physical damage, natural events, excessive harvest pressure, changes in stream flows, and water quality degradation have impaired habitat.
- Overfishing is believed to be a major cause of declining fish stocks.
- Three of the region's five major river basins (Neuse, Tar-Pamlico and Chowan) are designated as Nutrient Sensitive Waters.
- A ten-year fish consumption advisory for dioxin was lifted in 2000, for a 50-mile stretch of the Chowan River.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ESTUARY PROGRAM

- Restored over 1,100 miles of anadromous fish habitat by removing three dams.
- Enhanced inter-agency and inter-state coordination through creation of APNEP Coordinating Council and a Memorandum of Agreement between North Carolina and Virginia.
- Increased citizen input through five stakeholder-driven river basin regional councils.
- Developed a comprehensive monitoring plan.
- Developed bycatch reduction gear and practices to reduce fisheries impacts.
- Restored two miles of riparian habitat along the Roanoke River through cattle fencing and riverbank stabilization practices.
- Established precision agriculture methods for over 500 acres of farmland.
- Reduced groundwater impacts with alternative septic system technology.
- Sustained citizens' water quality monitoring program since 1988.

Hot Crab and Spinach Dip

2 tbl oil
1-1/2 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
1 medium onion, chopped
8 oz cream cheese, cubed
2 small tomatoes, chopped and peeled
1 can green chilies
1/2 cup half and half
1 10-oz pkg. frozen spinach
(thaw and pat dry)
1 clove garlic, chopped
6 oz crab meat (well picked-over)
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

SautØ onion and garlic in oil, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and green chilies. Cook 2 minutes.

Transfer mixture to a large bowl. Add all remaining ingredients. Spoon into baking dish. Bake at 400 degrees until bubbly, about 40-45 minutes.

Serve with tortilla chips or lightly toasted pita points.

Diced shrimp can also be used in place of the crab meat!