

# The Washington Times

## Seafood treats in Tackle Box

### New England-style atmosphere on M Street

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Ah, brisk sea air. The fresh, salty aroma of the ocean; gulls screeching as they swoop down to pick up discarded bits of bread or a forgotten french fry; the incomparable taste of a lobster roll as you linger, as evening falls, at a long wooden table at a seaside fish shack somewhere along the Connecticut coast. Or maybe Maine.



Tackle box on busy M Street in Georgetown can't give you all of that, but it can give you an excellent lobster roll, sweet and tender clams and shrimp. As we're hundreds of miles south of Maine, what can you expect?

Most everything on the menu at Tackle Box, the little brother of Hook, the expensive fish restaurant next door, is a lot better than what you might get at the typical New England fish shack.

Tackle Box has lobster pots at the door, fishing equipment and nets hanging from the ceiling, long wooden tables and benches, and self-service or carry-out food served in plastic with plastic utensils and cups, but the food is sophisticated in its simplicity and as fresh as anything served on the coast.

Fish, including a lobster pot to go, is the order of every day. A hamburger, a hot dog or a chorizo can placate guests who turn up their noses at all things fishy, but the fish are the show. For the price reflecting the Georgetown rent, it doesn't get any better.

Appetizers include four grilled oysters, barely cooked and retaining a lovely smoky flavor. Sweet bay scallops are battered and quickly deep-fried to delicious crispness. There's nothing greasy about these morsels. Calamari and clams can be ordered crispy or grilled.

The Tackle Box version of gazpacho is unusual: pale orange, creamy, slightly spicy with an undercurrent of olive oil, and it's irresistibly good. Traditional New England clam chowder is available.

The Maine Meal — one fish, one sauce and two sides — is a good deal for \$13. A nice-sized portion of fish is wood-grilled and served perfectly cooked so that the fish, even a thin filet of trout, remains moist.

Fish choices vary by market and availability, but just now, the choice ranges from bluefish, tilapia and trout to calamari, bay scallops, shrimp, clams and oysters. The bluefish and the trout could not have been better.

Sides accompanying the fish range from a satisfying macaroni and cheese to a fine version of coleslaw: cabbage with slivers of carrots in a light mayonnaise dressing. Other sides are terrific: sweet potato fries, hot and crisp yet chewy; a good beet salad; slightly crisp grilled plump asparagus lightly dusted with salt; grilled broccoli; potato salad; mashed potatoes; and a green salad.

The Maine Meal includes a choice of sauces. Particularly good is the mild tartar sauce; the garlic aioli sauce is very garlicky.

The hamburger, chorizo and hot dog are grilled, and the dog and sausage are served in the same traditional buttered roll as the lobster, clam and shrimp. The chorizo is nothing special, but the lobster roll is a generous portion of chopped lobster on the buttered bun. It could use a little more seasoning; it's tasty but dear at \$19. A whole lobster is available for \$29.

Desserts, made in-house, include brownies and an excellent blueberry pie, which we took home.

Tackle Box's Lobster Pot to Go can be delivered or picked up. For \$39.99 per person, each pot includes a live Maine lobster, giant quahog clam, white-water mussels, chorizo, grilled red onion, potatoes, spices, drawn butter and rockweed, a type of seaweed used in authentic New England clambakes.

Until the liquor license arrives in September, beverages are limited to soft drinks, lemonade and iced tea. Wine and beer are coming.