

Cruising the Chesapeake

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For American Cruise Lines' Chef Kevin Cottle, serving local fare is an important part of cruising the Chesapeake Bay.

“I’m a big fan of seafood on American Cruise Lines,” says Mark Wisner of Houston, Texas. “The striped bass/rockfish is nicely done.” Wisner’s talking about the fish served on ACL’s Constitution cruise around the Chesapeake Bay this past December. Wisner is on board for to talk about the art and lives of people around the time of the Revolutionary War, the theme of the 11-day cruise that starts in Baltimore and calls at such ports as Norfolk, Yorktown, Washington, Cambridge, St. Michaels, and Annapolis before returning to Baltimore. (Seven- and eight-day cruises are also an option in the Spring and Fall.)

Margit Gibbons, from Andover, Kansas, had never visited the Chesapeake Bay area before now. “The crab cakes are fabulous. I loved picking and eating the crab,” she says, referring to the talk and demonstration given by Annapolitan Lori Gross about the history of the crab industry. “I have a newfound respect for the crabbing industry. I never knew it was all hand cracked and picked.”

American Cruise Lines (ACL) has 15 boats in their fleet of small boats (from 100 to 200 passengers) sailing 50 itineraries. They have ports of call in 35 states across the country from Florida to Alaska so wherever they are, they provide a cruising close to home experience. They focus on using local products and preferences as much as possible, so satisfying the palates of thousands of passengers cruising annually, can be tricky.



“The menu changes seasonally and year to year,” says Kevin Cottle, ACL Corporate Executive Chef. “Each year we change the preparation of our menu using our excellent culinary leadership teams’ regional Bay seafood.”

On the Chesapeake Bay cruises, blue crab is highly sought after. The ACL team uses a local cannery to provide fresh picked local crab. “I am extremely passionate and focused on providing our guests with local specialties and unique recipes from each region we cruise. I am big fan of teaching our guests about all the different regional cuisines that the United States has to offer. Our guests truly love seeing how recipes and specialties are prepared and engaging directly with our chefs.”

Cottle notes that a different menu is prepared for each East Coast cruise as they hit four different locations. The Chesapeake Bay cruises from Baltimore offer selections of crab and East Coast fishes, including a feast with freshly steamed crabs and later in the season an oyster-shucking experience. The Historic South & Golden Isles cruise operates between Jacksonville, Florida, and Charleston, South Carolina, and features lots of local fish and shrimp and grits. ACL summer cruises throughout New England offer traditional New England foods from chowders to lobster bakes. And along the Hudson River each October, the menu features more fall style foods and lots of local apple dishes.

Robert T. Yonskie is another ACL lecturer who is an expert on Revolutionary War history. “When it comes to the menu, ACL does a good job incorporating changes into the breakfast, such as using local blueberries in Maine in the pancakes and local crab in the crab cake Benedict on the Chesapeake Bay.”

Almost all cruises have local residents or people who used to live in the area but moved away. “We ALWAYS have at least one or two people or groups traveling their ‘home’ area,” says Yonskie. “Usually, they say that they’ve seen all these places, but it’s a new, unique, and beautiful experience doing it from the water.”

[American Cruise Lines](#)

800-460-4518

*Chesapeake Bay Cruise Round-Trip from Baltimore, MD
May, October and November 2023*