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White House Chef Heads to New Orleans to Promote Gulf Seafood

Updated: 18 hours 50 minutes ago

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(Sept. 13) -- In a continuing federal push to promote Gulf of Mexico seafood in the wake of the massive BP oil spill, White House Executive Chef Cristeta Comerford and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Margaret Hamburg are traveling to New Orleans today to join with [local and national chefs](#) to boost the image of the region's ocean bounty.

According to [Obama Foodorama](#), a blog focusing on the administration's food policy, the group will tour seafood-processing facilities, take trips with fishermen and shrimpers, and receive a dockside briefing from Hamburg. The day will end with a block party shrimp boil in association with the [St. Bernard Project](#), an organization that helps residents still displaced from Hurricane Katrina find their way home.



Mike Clarke, AFP/Getty Images

White House Executive Chef Cristeta Comerford, seen here in August, is heading to New Orleans to promote gulf seafood.

The [Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board](#) is sponsoring the events, which it hopes will help a beleaguered industry begin to recover from the damage done both by water closures and the mark left by oil on their products' public perception. The government has been helping, and since the spill, the White House, the FDA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have repeatedly stressed the safety of gulf seafood as waters reopen for fishing and shrimping.

Last month, President Barack Obama [hosted a ceremony](#) honoring the Super Bowl champion New Orleans Saints in which guests dined on gulf shrimp.

"With the ongoing reopening of gulf fisheries, we're excited that fishermen can go back to work and Americans can confidently and safely enjoy gulf seafood once again," the president said in his remarks. "We're certainly going to enjoy it here at the White House."

Still, some scientists feel that the government has prematurely reopened water for fishing, and that current testing is inadequate. A group of 24 organizations, including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Gulf Restoration Network, [sent letters](#) to the FDA and NOAA last month calling for changes in gulf seafood testing.

Today's events come on the heels of the fourth annual New Orleans Seafood Festival, which drew a record-breaking crowd of over 30,000 attendees, [according to FOX 8](#).