

Monterey is holding its first-ever Abalone Festival (July 26-27)

The beautiful (and tasty) sea snail is getting the respect it deserves at this unique fest.



Art Seavey, president of the Monterey Abalone Company, holds abalone grown in a cage underneath the Municipal Wharf in Monterey, Calif., on Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025. (Doug Duran/Bay Area News Group)



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Ever enjoy an abalone? Those gorgeous-shelled sea snails whose meat is springy, briny and [so *not* like a “rubber boot”](#) when prepared properly?

Chances are you have if you live near Monterey Bay, which in the 1920s provided some 75 percent of California’s abalone harvest. Now the region is saluting its mollusc-tastic history with its first-ever [Monterey Abalone Festival](#), debuting in late July with cultural and scientific activities (and something mysterious called an “Abalone Dance”).

The free festival takes place 10 a.m.-5 p.m. July 26 and July 27 at and around the Monterey Japanese American Citizens League hall (424 Adams St., Monterey) — which, fun fact, was built with funds derived from catching abalones. While the festival doesn’t plan on serving food — though you can watch your food crawl across the floor during “abalone races” — there will be abundant opportunities to enjoy this delicacy at local seafood purveyors.

“Attendees may want to go over to enjoy some delicious abalone dishes at some of the restaurants at Old Fisherman’s Wharf located a few blocks away,” emails a fest organizer. “These include Abalonetti Bar and Grill, Rockfish Harbor Grill, Cafe Fina, Domenico’s on the Wharf and Old Fisherman’s Grotto.”

The schedule for the two-day event is packed like, well, a big ol’ sea snail in a too-small shell — visit the citizen league’s website for all the details (www.jaclmonterey.org). But here are some highlights of what’s on tap:

- an “Abalone Dance” performed by the Monterey Rumsen Ohlone Community on Del Monte Beach;
- abalone races;
- an abalone-centric walking tour of Monterey;
- talks from commercial abalone farmers, abalone fishermen, historians and cultural experts;
- Films: “Morro Bay: Once the Abalone Capital of the World,” “Monterey Abalone Story,” “The Abalone Song” and more;
- a Zoom conversation with historians and scientists from Tateyama, Japan, the ancestral home of Japanese abalone divers who came to Monterey.

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