

Fall Greetings from all of us at Village Craftsmen!

The world and our country have changed drastically since our last newsletter was published. The people of Ocracoke Island have responded, as people all over our land have, with feelings of shock and deep grief. And, like so many of our fellow citizens, we have joined together to make donations to various relief agencies working to help alleviate the suffering resulting from the attacks on September 11.

Village Craftsmen has chosen the [September 11th Fund](#), established by United Way and The New York Community Trust, as the recipient of our designated company donation. Other island businesses, organizations and individuals have contributed to this and other worthy funds. All of us at Village Craftsmen express our deepest consolation to those who lost loved ones or were otherwise directly affected by the September 11 attacks. And we mourn this great tragedy in solidarity with all of our fellow citizens.

As always, Ocracoke is a special place of tranquility, peace, and reflection for many people. In truth, this is what Ocracoke has always meant to so many of us. We hope you will continue to see our beautiful island as a refuge and a place for healing and rejuvenation. Our beautiful blue October skies and balmy temperatures, as well as our quiet village and serene beaches, have helped our Fall visitors feel refreshed after just a day or two.

Of course, Ocracoke is becoming quieter this time of the year, providing an opportunity for islanders to rediscover some of the simple joys of living here. As we all know, in this modern age it is so easy to feel disconnected from nature and our surroundings. Few of us ever experience the satisfaction that our early hunter-gatherer ancestors felt while collecting their food for the day from the bounties of nature. Even on Ocracoke most of our food is purchased from one of the local markets, although fishermen know the excitement of landing a channel bass, flounder, bluefish, or even one of the larger tuna or dolphin fish.

Clamming is a totally different experience. It is slow and methodical, quiet and contemplative. It can be done with a minimum of equipment. Clam rakes and a floating basket are helpful, but fingers & toes and a mesh bag work almost as well. Sometimes it helps to have a boat or a kayak to get out to Hog Shoal, but many people just wade out into the shallow water from shore.

[Clamming on Hog Shoal](#)



In water no more than waist deep, often little more than covering our ankles, we walk slowly over the shoal, pushing our rakes ahead of us. We are waiting for the distinctive feel of the tines scraping over the rounded shell of a buried quahog. Then we dig the rake deep into the sand and draw back. Once in a while we will be rewarded with two clams. Into the basket or one of our pockets they go.

It's more difficult to push the rake through thick sea grass that often grows in the shallow water, but frequently the grass harbors clams. Not infrequently we see blue crabs scuttering by, or notice a skate or disturb a flounder lying quietly on the bottom. Veteran clambers are seldom fooled by the feel of stray oyster or scallop shells, but "mudders," empty clam shells filled with sand and mud, can be deceptive.

Clamming affords ample time to visit and share stories with your companions, but it also can be a time to wander off by yourself and ponder life and love and the beauty and mystery of this magnificent planet. Here, just inches below the sandy bottom, lies our supper. After several hours of warm sun on our backs and a renewed connection with the salt water from which our distant ancestors evolved we return to shore with two hundred clams and the satisfaction of knowing that we still understand, at some level, our place in the intricate web of life.

The following recipe for Ocracoke Clam Chowder by Edna O'Neal is from the [Ocracoke Cook Book](#) and will serve 10-20 people:

Ingredients: 5 lbs. potatoes, peeled and chopped
2 onions, peeled and chopped
3 pints clams, chopped
6 quarts water
1 1/2 tbsp. salt

Bring the above ingredients to a boil and then simmer about 2 hours. Meanwhile, fry out 2 thick slices of salt pork. Add pork and grease to the above; cover. Stir occasionally. If water gets low, add a little hot water. May add about 2 tbsp. of meal. When potatoes are tender, clams are ready.

Soon the water will be too cold for clamming. But we will return to Pamlico Sound next Spring for more time out on the shoal, gathering supper for family and friends.

Be sure to remember Village Craftsmen as you prepare for the holiday season. Our on-line catalog is filled with distinctive hand-crafted gifts for holiday giving. Use the links on the left to explore our site often.

Until next month, we offer our hopes for a safe and secure world, characterized by peace and justice for all of our brothers and sisters, both at home and around the globe. And please stop by and say hello if you are planning a visit to the island. We are open 10 am to 5 pm, Monday through Saturday until the end of December (with only a few exceptions!).

Our best to you from all of the folks at Village Craftsmen.