

EAT & DRINK

# WHAT A CATCH

Forsyth Seafood's mother-daughter duo dishes on flavor and the future.

BY: ALICE MANNING TOUCHETTE

This page: photo by Jodie Brim



**V**irginia Hardesty knows good seafood. A native of the coastal town of Beaufort, N.C., Hardesty and her late husband Charlie grew up with seafood as a part of everyday life. After moving to Winston-Salem in the mid-'70s for school and work, the couple longed for that fresh fish and shellfish they enjoyed on the coast. Their solution, Forsyth Seafood Market and Café, is now a local staple. From its home in East Winston-Salem, just blocks from downtown and Winston-Salem State University, Forsyth Seafood is famous for its freshly prepared Eastern North Carolina style seafood, hush puppies, and house-made slaw.

"In 35 years, the changes have been plentiful and great," says Hardesty. "We started with just a fresh fish market with wild caught seafood from the Outer Banks and have grown to have a 100-seater, fast-casual restaurant. We are better able to serve our

customers, but through it all, our commitment to supplying fresh and quality products remained consistent."

Hardesty passed that commitment along to her daughter, Ashley Hardesty Armstrong, who co-owns Forsyth Seafood and is the head chef. "Ashley and I share a vision for Forsyth Seafood Market and Café's sustainability and growth," says Hardesty.

Before joining the family business, Armstrong earned her B.S. in Fashion Textile and Brand Management at NC State University, became a certified nutritional coach, and completed her degree in the culinary arts. She is also the founder and chef behind The Table Experience, a farm-to-table dinner party series featuring ingredients sourced from local farmers, artisans, and makers, and offering a side of wellness education.

Armstrong is utilizing her expertise and experience to implement some

changes that will carry Forsyth Seafood into the future.

"My goal is to expose our customers to new flavors and local ingredients," says Armstrong. "We have added chef-inspired seasonal items to our menu in the restaurant to give our loyal customers different options."

In addition, the mother-daughter duo is expanding their event catering services — both in-house and on location — and the opening of a second location for Forsyth Seafood is on the horizon.

We're excited to roll out the Forsyth Seafood Truck for community, private, and professional events," says Armstrong.

The two women at the heart of the business are committed to helping the Winston-Salem community as proud employers of local residents and college students and supporters of various local efforts. And their special bond helps makes Forsyth Seafood a Winston-Salem favorite. 🍴



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**BEST SELLER**

The secret ingredient in Forsyth Seafood's famous shrimp burger? A heaping scoop of house-made sweet, creamy coleslaw – the perfect complement to crispy fried shrimp.

**Opposite Page:** Fresh NC Blue Crab  
**This Page:** Ashley Hardesty Armstrong and her mother, Virginia Hardesty