

TOP STORY

## Brazoria County Day creator hasn't missed one yet

By JESSICA KUHN [jessica.kuhn@thefacts.com](mailto:jessica.kuhn@thefacts.com) 6 hrs ago



SARAH RENCURREL/Facts file photo

Sen. Larry Taylor, R-Friendswood, fills a plate of shrimp from a boat during the World's Largest Shrimp Cocktail at the Fiesta Gardens in March 2015 in Austin. The shrimp feast is the traditional closing event for Brazoria County Day activities in the state capital, with legislators and other state officials mingling with the local delegation.

**AUSTIN** — It was 1973 the first time Wayne Shaw and a handful of other Brazoria County residents headed to Austin with a boat load of shrimp, homemade red sauce, beer and crackers.

Theme days at the Capitol in Austin were popular back in the early 1970s, Shaw said.

Various taxing entities would use the time as a way to discuss and present any issues currently facing their respective areas to state legislatures, he said.

"They were having kolache day, barbecue day, chili day and sausage day," he said. "At the time, we were trying to be recognized in Brazoria County."

The majority of the legislatures weren't privileged to certain perks of living on the coast, such as fresh seafood, Shaw said.

"Therefore, Gulf shrimp was pretty attractive to those people," he said.

Initially, Shaw believed the event — referred to as the Worlds Largest Shrimp Cocktail dinner — would last only a couple of sessions.

"However, it has become a real classic event in Austin," he said. "In fact, I have been to Austin and working around the Capitol and people see me that know I am from Brazoria County and holler at me, 'Hey is it Brazoria County Day yet?'"

The creator of the event and current steering committee member is taken aback at how popular the shrimp dinner has become, he said.

"It's pretty humbling," Shaw said. "I've been involved with a lot of different events during my career and this one by far is the one I am proudest of. It's been very successful and I am just very pleased to be associated with it."

Shaw hasn't missed one Brazoria County Day since its inception more than 40 years ago, he said.

"I've been recognized on the floor at the House and Senate as the founder," he said. "I have appreciated everybody's continued support."

Though when it comes to assisting, the event's coordinator, Debbie Pennington, said Shaw makes sure no details are forgotten.

"This morning he was going over everything," she said Wednesday. "A lot of the people he has them on speed dial and he is calling the sheriff, the person who does the shrimp. I would be afraid to try and put together something this size without Wayne."

However, Shaw said he can't do everything.

For 36 years, Ron Brazil has been the man behind the homemade red sauce, normally made in a sterilized trash can while being stirred with a paddle.

After being appointed to the task in 1981, Brazil had his work cut out for him considering he had never made red sauce before, he said.

"I asked the committee what do you put it in and they named off a bunch of stuff," he said. "I added a little bit to it and it seems to be a hit."

Tuesday night's shrimp dinner is going to be an end of an era of sorts, because it will be Brazil's last one spent in the kitchen at Fiesta Gardens, he said, before adding he may attend the event in the future as a county resident.

Fortunately for foodies, Brazil has brought along a seasoned apprentice, who has helped the past few Brazoria County Days, and plans to pass the paddle to him officially during the event, he said.

"Richard Wood, who owns the Wurst Haus, is going to be taking over for me," Brazil said.

Besides Wood, Brazil is the only person who knows the secret recipe, which he only divulged one ingredient — ketchup. "That's all I am going to tell you," he said.

While the main focus of the event is to kick back and have a good time while thanking the county's state representative and senators, business goes on behind the scenes, Pennington said.

"Every time we drop off our gift we have our legislative issues page in there," she said.

Work on the page typically starts about 15 to 18 months out from the upcoming session, Pennington said.

"We contact all the chambers of commerce along with all the taxing entities in the county and say, 'What issues do you see? Were there issues from the past legislation session that were unresolved,'" she said.

It's sent out to the majority of county's taxing entities before going before Brazoria County Commissioners Court and then a government relations committee created for the event, Pennington said.

"It's a serious thing," she said.

The page normally is delivered in January at the start of the session, Pennington said.

"The legislators will tell us when an issue comes from down here, they know how big our voice is because they know how many people show up for this and how the citizens are dedicated," she said. "This is the residents of Brazoria County pulling together countywide to have a voice in Austin."

Anyone who lives or works in Brazoria County is invited to attend the event and can stop by the Hyatt Regency Austin, 208 Barton Springs Road, pick up a goodie bag and event T-shirt, Pennington said.

The two-day event will officially kick off at 8 a.m. Monday at the Hyatt Regency Austin with a continental breakfast sponsored by Associated Credit Union of Texas, Ron Carter Automotive Dealerships and TranSystems Corp., Pennington said.

Various private meetings with state agencies will take place today followed by a free reception, which is open to state officials and Brazoria County residents, at 5:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Austin hosted by Denbury Resources Inc., HDR Engineering Inc., Honda of Lake Jackson and Port Freeport, she said.

Brazoria County Day will start at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday at the Hyatt Regency Austin with the Legislative Breakfast. Pennington said there are 300 seats available during the free breakfast and will be given out on a first-come, first-served basis.

From there, residents will head to the Capitol to start passing through the metal detectors.

At 10 a.m., the recognition of Brazoria County Day is scheduled in the House with Senate recognition immediately following, Pennington said, adding everyone is encouraged to wear their event T-shirts throughout the day.

Lastly, attendees are invited from 5 to 8 p.m. to the plaza of Fiesta Gardens in Austin for what is billed the World's Largest Shrimp Cocktail.

The shrimp is being provided by Dow Chemical Co. and MEGlobal, Pennington said, adding there are a lot of area businesses who contribute and make Brazoria County Day possible.

For information, call 979-848-0560.

Jessica Kuhn is the digital editor for The Facts and can be reached at 979-237-0152.

**IF YOU GO**

WHAT: Brazoria County Day

WHEN: 9 a.m. March 7

WHERE: Texas State Capitol, 1100 Congress Ave, Austin

COST: Free

INFO: Call 979-848-0560

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