

## 50 Years of Lobster Rolls: Evelyn's Drive-In celebrates their 50th anniversary

Evelyn's Drive-In is the real deal. There are a lot of excellent places to get New England seafood around Rhode Island. Restaurants serving clam cakes, clam chowder, lobster rolls and fish n' chips are in solid supply in the Ocean State. But how many of those restaurants include these directions on their website? "Motor slowly under the bridge. Evelyn's dock is inside on the left. If you're coming in a sailboat, you can anchor outside the bridge, in the lee, out of the southwest wind and dinghy in?"

Yeah. Authenticity is *not* an issue for Evelyn's Drive-In.

If I was writing a book about a picture-perfect New England summer that revolved around a familial cornerstone seafood restaurant, whatever I would come up with would pale in comparison to the real life Evelyn's Drive-In.

The humble clam shack appearance at Evelyn's is ideal — and almost essential — for the atmosphere of sitting down to a perfect half-dozen clam cakes in the summer. Evelyn Dupont opened the drive-in in 1969. Jane and Dom Bitto bought it from her in 1987. Rumor has it that Dom took a wrong turn on his way to the Cape to look at purchasing a different restaurant, ended up in Tiverton at Evelyn's and overheard a casual conversation about the restaurant going up for sale. I spoke with both Jane and Dom to find out the secret to keeping this charming seafood haven hustling and bustling after 50 years of business.

"Over the years, we added an outdoor waterfront patio, and added lots of grilled seafood and New England favorites to the menu as well as many signature cocktails. In 2003, we founded a non-profit organization, Singing Out Against Hunger. We host our annual concert series raising funds and awareness for our hungry neighbors in need. Coming from contribution, we love supporting our community," they explained via email.

"We are EXTREMELY grateful and fortunate to celebrate our 50th anniversary. Looking forward to many more years to come!"

The first thing that comes to mind when I think of a restaurant reaching such a milestone is the ever-changing culinary scene. Even just 15 years ago, I found our rich RI food scene to be a very different place. Over the course of 50 years, I had to assume that would bring on monstrous changes.

"There is [increased] variety, with more options tailored to all taste buds. We've found our community has a desire for twists on local classics. Our patrons, however, still seek out our original classics like our famous fish n' chips, lobster rolls and fried clams."

Evelyn's is happy to put their own twist on classics, as evidenced by their lobster chow mein. You read that right. Evelyn's lobster chow mein is five ounces of lobster atop a hot chow mein gravy and local crispy noodles (as seen on "Diners, Drive-Ins, & Dives"). It's must-try for those looking for a little bit of a new spin on a New England seafood classic.

My final question for the Bittos was the most obvious, but I needed to know. How does a restaurant

owner achieve this kind of unbelievably impressive longevity?

“Serving the world through hospitality, kindness and gratitude. We have so many generations of loyal customers and employees who love Evelyn’s. Our commitment to outstanding customer service and hospitality to our patrons, along with serving the freshest seafood in the area, has solidified our commitment to quality and providing an exceptional experience for anyone walking through the doors.”

*Evelyn’s Drive-In is located at 2335 Main Road Tiverton. For more information, go to [evelynsdrivein.com](http://evelynsdrivein.com)*