

Famous Faidley's By Jacob Russo

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When you think of Baltimore, what comes to mind? You may think of the Orioles or the Ravens. Maybe you think of the Inner Harbor, or the neighborhoods of row houses that line the streets. While the more famous attractions receive the most attention, it is now time to turn and look into the slightly less well-known aspects of Baltimore. While still making a name for themselves in the city, Faidley Seafood has not yet received national attention on the same scale as the Harbor, or the O's. However, I'm here to tell you that it should. Located in Lexington Market, Faidley's is, unquestionably, the spot to visit when in town.

Founded in 1886 by John Faidley Senior, Faidley's operates as a family-owned business. In 1964, the current owners, Bill and Nancy Devine, took over the business (Dean). Early on in their ownership, Bill made the decision that he did not want a conventional sit-down restaurant. Instead, he established a casual restaurant with limited seating so that most customers would have to eat standing at tables. This allows more customers to enjoy food at one time (Dean). The illuminated neon "Faidley Seafood" sign just above the cash

register beckons to you, as if calling "Welcome." Quotes line the walls, praising Faidley's, and reassuring your decision to dine in. The mood inside feels very hospitable and inviting.

Faidley's became known as the place to go in Baltimore when, in 1987, Nancy revolutionized the crab cake. Instead of making her crab cake out of regular crab meat, she decided to make them exclusively from jumbo lump crab meat. "No one was making gourmet crab cake made from the jumbo lump crab meat, and made only from the jumbo lump," stated Nancy Devine (qtd. in Park). Faidley's exhibited their originality by making their cakes in this way. The jumbo lump crab meat "comes from the muscles on the crab that attach to its swimmer fins. There are only two pieces of jumbo lump meat on each crab, and it takes between 30 and 40 crabs to make a single Faidley's crab cake" (Park). This makes each crab cake extremely expensive to produce. They go for \$14.95 a piece, but the quality you receive justifies the price. The higher

quality meat ensures that customers will keep coming back for more. "I'll definitely be back!" says Richard from Yelp. Not only did Nancy change the type of crab meat she put in her crab cakes, but the shape of them, too. Using her hands, she "made them in balls, not hockey-puck-like discs, so that she could simply roll

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the cakes together without mashing them and thus breaking up the lumps of meat" (Park). She found that the perfect size was the shape of her balled hands,

deeming her the sole roller of Faidley's crab cakes. While many restaurants still produce a lower quality crab cake, Faidley's conforms to the customer's demands by hand crafting their cakes from premium meat.

I ordered this famous jumbo lump crab cake, and let me tell you, I have never eaten anything like it in my life.

"BEST CRAB CAKE I HAVE EVER HAD!!" raves Kim Y. from New York. Faidley's prides themselves on their jumbo lump crab cakes,

which are their signature item and by far the most popular. Lara B. claims "these softballs of amazing crabmeat were nothing short of heaven on a plate." Unlike many other restaurants, a Faidley's crab cake is made up of mostly crab meat and minimal filler. "[The crab cake] was sweet, meaty, and creamy. There was definitely way more crab than cake" (C., Nick). This makes them exceptionally good and the preferred crab cake in Baltimore. The crab itself melts in your mouth and is complemented by the mix of saltine cracker, mayonnaise, and mustard that binds the crab cake together (Park). If you're turned off by mustard or mayo being in your food, don't be. I, too, don't like either sauce, but I couldn't recognize either while eating my crab cake. All of the flavors coalesce beautifully into the Baltimore-famous Faidley Seafood crab cake.

Faidley's specializes in their jumbo lump crab cakes, but that is not to say that they do not have other mouth-watering menu items. In the center of the restaurant stands a raw bar where you can purchase freshly shucked raw oysters and clams harvested daily from the Chesapeake Bay. I did not try the oysters, but Vikki L. from Yelp expresses that she was in "Raw Oyster Heaven." However, I did purchase the soft shell crab sandwich and the clam chowder. The soft shell crab was absolutely amazing. Who would have thought that a whole fried crab, legs and all, and garnished with only lettuce and tomato, would hold so much taste! The simplicity worked beautifully. The crispy and tender sandwich lived up to the signs posted along the walls glorifying its reputation. Then came the clam chowder. I was surprised to find loose broth, more like a chicken noodle soup. After being raised in New England, I know

clam chowder to be thick and creamy. However, this was no Progresso clam chowder. Faidley's obviously used fresh clams. The soup itself was seasoned with the perfect mix of herbs and spices. I enjoyed the Baltimorean take on clam chowder and did not leave without fulfilling my craving. I, like numerous others who have visited, have only positives so say about Faidley's; everything was made fresh and to my liking.

When a native Baltimorean speaks about the city, Faidley Seafood is rarely left out. Slowly but surely, Faidley's is making itself a world presence. The crab cakes and all the food in general are hard to pass up. Maybe you've never heard of Faidley Seafood before reading this, but I urge you, at some point in your time here at Loyola, to visit the restaurant. Faidley's is a one-stop-shop that satisfies all of your seafood cravings.



Soft shell crab sandwich with clam chowder (top) and jumbo lump crab cake with steak fries and mac 'n cheese (bottom).

Photo by Jacob Russo

"However, this was no Progresso clam chowder."

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