



# The Maryland Food Center: Making Your Meals Possible

If you eat in a restaurant, shop in a local grocery, or dine in a hotel, banquet hall, or other food-service venue, the chances are good that the fruits and vegetables in your meal probably passed through the Maryland Wholesale Produce Market. And, if you dined on fish, crabs, or other seafood, it was likely shipped to your plate via the Maryland Wholesale Seafood Market.

The two massive wholesale markets and an assortment of food and food-related businesses make up the Maryland Food Center in Jessup. The 400-acre center was created in 1967 to consolidate smaller markets then operating at Camden Yards, Pulaski Highway, and Light Street in Baltimore. The site at the junction of Routes 1 and 175 put the new warehouse center on a major road network, along a train line, proximate to an airport, and midway between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

The Maryland Food Center Authority developed the Food Center as a public and private partnership with tenants ranging from traditional, family-owned purveyors, renting a single, 3,300-square-foot unit, to Giant Food with its own 720,000-square-foot distribution center and other major food distributors.

A growing consumer base and changing tastes have led a number of tenants to expand and update their facilities. "It will make our operation more efficient," says Tim Sughrue, executive vice president of Congressional Seafood Company. Sughrue pointed to boxes of iced flounder, halibut from Alaska, Atlantic salmon, sacks of clams, and crates of softshell crabs. "Our product comes in and we operate 24 hours a day. We cut

everything to order; we have 60 employees and 10 fish cutters who will cut 15,000 pounds of fish. If orders are in by 1:00am, they will be cut, packaged, invoiced, and out the doors by 6:30am. If a fluke caught in New England is on a truck and into Boston by 1:00 in the afternoon, we can have it by 3:30. Forty percent of the stuff that comes in, goes out that same day."

"We do all of the frou-frou kind of stuff," says Jimi Farrell, Director of Operations for Coosemans DC, Inc., a specialty produce purveyor in Warehouse D. "It's more expensive, it's more upscale."

Coosemans handles herbs, specialty, and ethnic produce and adds value to its products through specialty packaging, adding recipes, servicing private labels, and supplying custom-processed items. Herbs, fruits, and vegetables come from as far away as Israel and customers include retail stores, supermarkets, and chain stores. Safeway and Giant both use Coosemans' produce.

"We are very aware of the current trends," continues Farrell. "Herbs are our backbone . . . We contract to local farmers in season. Getting the produce closer to home is easier for us. We are also trying to be as responsible as possible and very conscious about recycling and post-consumer plastics."

The MFCA has become a national and international model for developing consolidated, wholesale food-distribution facilities. "This is a food-related industrial park," says Betty Allison, MFCA's deputy director.

## Honey-Lime Scallops

Courtesy of Franks Fresh Seafood (800-287-5960, www.franksseafood.com)

Serves 2

1/2 pound preservative-free sea scallops

2 tablespoons honey

1 tablespoon oil

4 teaspoons lime juice

1/4 teaspoon grated lime peel

Dash hot pepper sauce

Lime wedges for serving

Combine honey, oil, lime juice, lime peel, and hot pepper sauce and place in a one-gallon Ziploc bag. Pat scallops dry on a paper towel and add to the marinade in the bag. Refrigerate, mixing occasionally, up to 24 hours. Preheat broiler. Arrange scallops and marinade in single layer in two individual broiler-proof dishes. Broil four inches from heat source, four to seven minutes, depending on the size of the scallops, or until opaque throughout and lightly browned. Serve with lime wedges and, if desired, warm French bread to soak up the juices.

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# Solomon Style Plus

Solomon's Island, Maryland, was once a sleepy little town. Today, the town is hopping with activity.

Among the fun activities is shopping for antiques. At Grandmother's Store ([www.grandmothersstore.com](http://www.grandmothersstore.com)),

Mary Siegert, one of the owners, states, "The remarkable thing about the store is that the building is over 100 years old and is still in use. I consider it a privilege to be able to help perpetuate this historical landmark that has touched so many people."

You find antique furniture throughout the store, including dressers, bookshelves, dolls, dishes, lamps, and jewelry. Enjoy the nice, homey feeling as you browse.

Annmarie Garden ([www.annmariegarden.org](http://www.annmariegarden.org)), a public sculpture garden and art center, is a jewel in Solomon's Island. Walk the 30-acre outdoor sculpture garden to view permanent and loaned works of sculpture. The museum, an affiliate of The Smithsonian Institute, is currently featuring exhibits of green art.


The Gift Shop at Annmarie Garden displays a wealth of beautiful merchandise. According to the shop's Norma LeVally, the buyers go to New York to make purchases. Most of the items are handmade.

John and Linda Whitney are among the artists whose works are featured in the gift shop. One item, a necklace with black onyx and mixed metals, caught my attention. This piece is representative of their unique style.

For the eco-shopper, there are a number of products made by Green Gecko Imports. This fair-trade Cambodian company hires people who are otherwise unemployable. Mothers who can't leave their children home alone create lovely 100-percent silk handbags, scarves, and accessories at home.

If you love style, you can't leave the area without visiting Caren's Solomon Style. This fabulous clothing and accessory store carries such lines as Frank Lymen, Habitat, Two Star Dog, and Niche, to name a few.

Artfully laid out in color-coordinated areas of the store are sundresses, T-shirts, and wraps. You'll enjoy walking through and locating different articles displayed in a unique manner. The dressing room, beautifully decorated as someone's bedroom, makes you feel at home.



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