



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:**

T.S. Strickland  
Founder, Blue Collards  
[ts@bluecollards.com](mailto:ts@bluecollards.com)  
850.776.0436

**Winner of TV's 'Top Chef' to headline Barleybrine Oyster & Craft Beer  
Weekend, April 4-6 in Pensacola**

*First-year event brings together celebrity chefs and craft brewers to help seafood workers  
affected by Hurricane Michael*

**PENSACOLA, Fla. (March 25, 2019)** — Craft brewers and celebrity chefs from across the South are rallying to help seafood workers affected by Hurricane Michael. The storm, which pummeled the state's main oyster-producing region in October, was only the latest in a long line of natural and manmade disasters to afflict the state's seafood industry.

Barleybrine Oyster & Craft Beer Weekend — being held April 4-6 in Pensacola, Florida — will bring together brewers, chefs and beer-loving foodies and raise funds for the Gulf Seafood Foundation's storm relief efforts.

"Florida's Forgotten Coast is home to some of the fiercest folks you'll ever meet," event organizer T.S. Strickland said in February. "If you've ever tossed back a dozen Florida oysters with a pitcher of beer, you've benefited from their hard work. The seafood industry here has had it tough, but they've always been tougher. We want to honor their oysters, their way of life and the fighting spirit that sustains it."

Strickland is the founder of Blue Collards, a Florida-based publishing and live events company that also produces Peat & Pearls, a celebration of Scotch and premium oysters hosted in Pensacola each fall, and the Hoe Cake Throw Down, a celebration of cornbread and bourbon being held this May.

Barleybrine's main event, being hosted April 6 at De Luna Winery, will feature craft beer tastings, live music and oyster small bites prepared by guest chefs. A portion of ticket sales will benefit the Gulf Seafood Foundation and their efforts to help seafood workers affected by the storm.

"We're expecting about a dozen chefs and two dozen breweries at our main event," Strickland said. "We'll also be hosting a kick-off party at a local brewery on April 4 and, on April 5, a beer dinner with 'Top Chef' winner Kelsey Barnard Clark."

Barnard-Clark, who took home top prize on the most recent season of Bravo's "Top Chef," will treat guests to a five-course dinner featuring craft beer pairings by Apalachicola's Oyster City Brewing Co. and a guided oyster tasting with Florida oyster farmers Joseph and Teresa Mercer, of TAB Oyster Co.

### **Challenging Times**

Hurricane Michael struck in the midst of the Mercers' first commercial harvest, dealing a near fatal blow to the couple's fledgling business, which was named for their three young daughters' first initials. The couple now is working to rebuild their "Piney Island Select" brand while Joseph holds down a day job at a nearby gunpowder factory.

"The increasing number of oyster aquaculture farms in the Gulf is important for the survival of the oyster industry," Teresa Mercer said. "Hurricane Michael was a setback, but we are once again harvesting our Piney Island Select oysters. In Pensacola we look forward to serving some of the best oysters coming from the Gulf."

The Mercers are part of an emerging class of oyster farmers using aquaculture techniques to revive the state's beleaguered industry. In just a few short years, Florida has seen the number of oyster farming leases jump to nearly 100. "It's a very hopeful trend for the state's seafood industry, as well as the Gulf of Mexico," Strickland said.

"The Gulf seafood industry is facing very challenging times, especially the oyster industry," Gulf Seafood Foundation Chairman Jim Gossen said. "Natural disasters, combined with manmade adversities, have plagued the industry from South Padre Isle to the Florida Keys. Our fishermen, as well as processors, are suffering, and there are few organizations reaching out to help. We are proud to partner with Blue Collards on this event to benefit Gulf fishermen like Joseph and Teresa Mercer."

### **Building Connections**

Strickland said the Mercers' story was a perfect illustration of Blue Collards' mission.

"The Mercers were one of the featured farms at last year's Peat & Pearls event," he said. "We paired them up with Chef Kelsey (Barnard-Clark), and she fell in love with their oysters and their story. Michael hit just days after the event, and the industry has really struggled since. But Kelsey has been able to use her platform from 'Top Chef' to help. Building those kinds of connections is at the heart of what we do."

Strickland said he hoped guests would leave Barleybrine with more than some new beers on their list of favorites.

"This isn't your typical festival," Strickland said. "Of course, we'll have great beer and delicious food, but we believe people are hungry for more. They crave understanding and connection. The Forgotten Coast has been in the news a lot since the storm, but, to most, it's still just a headline. We want our guests to leave understanding why this place and its people are so special and why they shouldn't be forgotten — especially right now."

Barleybrine is made possible through the support of Visit Pensacola, the tourism marketing arm of Escambia County, Florida. For ticket prices and programming details, visit [www.bluecollards.com/barleybrine](http://www.bluecollards.com/barleybrine).

### **Schedule of Events**

Tickets for most events during Barleybrine are a la' carte. Admission to all events is restricted to those aged 21 and older.

*HAIRY MAN HOOTENANNY*  
*6:30-9:30 PM, THURSDAY, APRIL*  
*PERFECT PLAIN BREWING CO.*  
*50 E. GARDEN ST.*  
*PENSACOLA, FL 32502*

Join Perfect Plain Brewing Co. — creators of the Hairy Man Stout — and Wilfrid's Barber & Fine Goods for our kick-off party. The event will include an oysterman's beard and mustache competition, drink specials, live music and more. This event is free, though RSVP's are required.

*"BLUEGRASS & SUNSHINE" BEER DINNER*  
*6-9 PM, FRIDAY, APRIL 5*  
*HERITAGE HALL AT SEVILLE QUARTER*  
*130 E. GOVERNMENT ST.*  
*PENSACOLA, FL 32503*

Join Chef Kelsey Barnard Clark, winner of Bravo's "Top Chef," for a sumptuous five-course dinner featuring fresh, Gulf Coast ingredients, a guided oyster tasting with Florida oyster farmers Joseph and Teresa Mercer (of TAB Oysters) and beer pairings from Apalachicola's Oyster City Brewing Co. Kelsey will be joined in the kitchen by local guest chefs Josh Warner, of the District, and David Penniman, of Classic City Catering. Seating is limited. Tickets are \$125.

*GRAND TASTING*  
*12-5 PM, SATURDAY, APRIL 6*  
*DE LUNA WINERY (MAP)*  
*116 E. GONZALEZ ST.*  
*PENSACOLA, FL 32501*

Enjoy Gulf oysters prepared by local chefs, live music and dozens of beers from some of the country's best craft breweries at Saturday's main event. Tickets range from \$15 for designated drivers to \$75 for VIP tickets.

###

### **About Barleybrine**

Barleybrine is a celebration of oysters and craft beer, held each spring in the colonial-era seaport of Pensacola, Florida. A portion of all ticket sales benefits the Gulf Seafood Foundation and their efforts to assist seafood workers affected by Hurricane Michael. Barleybrine is a project of Blue Collards.

### **About Blue Collards**

Blue Collards is a celebration of hard work, good taste and true community. Through digital storytelling and live events, we seek to bring our audience of Southern, urban professionals closer to their food, the earth and one another. For more information, visit [www.bluecollards.com](http://www.bluecollards.com).

### **About the Gulf Seafood Foundation**

The Gulf Seafood Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, was formed to support and promote high standards for the Gulf of Mexico's vast commercial and recreational fisheries industry. The Foundation works with partners in

hospitality, petroleum, tourism and adjacent sectors to ensure the safety, availability and economic value of this vital resource. For more information, visit [www.gulfseafoodfoundation.org](http://www.gulfseafoodfoundation.org)

**Additional Sources:**

Jim Gossen  
Chairman, Gulf Seafood Foundation  
[jim@jimgossen.com](mailto:jim@jimgossen.com)

Kelsey Barnard Clark  
Founder & Chef, Eat KBC  
[kelseybarnardcatering@gmail.com](mailto:kelseybarnardcatering@gmail.com)

Teresa Mercer  
Founder, TAB Oyster Co.  
[taboystersllc@hotmail.com](mailto:taboystersllc@hotmail.com)