



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 5, 2011

NEW BEDFORD AND BOSTON SEAFOOD DISPLAY AUCTION LAUNCHES GLOUCESTER FACILITY

AUCTION TO BE KNOWN AS BUYERS & SELLERS EXCHANGE OF NEW ENGLAND (BASE)

LOCAL FACILITIES WILL BE CALLED:

BASE New Bedford, BASE Boston, BASE Gloucester

NEW BEDFORD, Mass. – On Wednesday, December 7, 2011, the seafood display auctions in New Bedford and Boston, and their existing seafood offloading facility in Gloucester will re-launch as BASE New England, a group of seafood display locations that will allow buyers worldwide to purchase New England fish electronically via the daily BASE online auction. BASE New England merges the seafood marketplaces in New England's three largest ports, New Bedford, Boston, and Gloucester, into one auction.

The organization integrates operations of the existing display auction facilities in New Bedford and Boston and adds a display facility in Gloucester. The group of organizations uses the Buyers and Sellers Exchange (BASE) software, developed by the New Bedford auction in the 1990s and updated continuously since then, to let buyers anywhere view prices and place bids remotely.

BASE New England is owned by brothers Richie and Raymond Canastra, who started the Whaling City Seafood Display Auction in New Bedford and the Boston Seafood Display Auction. Those locations will be renamed BASE New Bedford and BASE Boston. The new location, BASE Gloucester, will be owned and operated

by Chris, Vito Jr., Nick and Marc Giacalone, who are well known to many existing clients of the New Bedford and Boston auctions, as they have operated the auctions' affiliated Gloucester unloading facility since 2008.

The heart of BASE New England is the Buyers and Sellers Exchange, an electronic fish auction system developed by the Canastras which provides real-time prices and opens bidding to buyers anywhere via the internet.

BASE New England will help ensure that buyers, most typically seafood distributors, have access to a steady supply of seafood. Anyone involved in buying, selling or processing seafood, regardless of where they live or work, can connect to the auctions through BASE.

"It's as though (buyers) have waterfront property themselves," said Raymond Canastra of BASE. "They have access to the fish just as if they were on the waterfront."

Fish sold at BASE New England auctions are predominately landed by New England boats and include species like scallops, cod, haddock, flounder, and pollock. BASE New England communicates with boats at sea through email; the boats tell BASE when they expect to arrive and the amount of fish onboard.

The boats unload their catch at the auctions (some seafood arrives by truck) and the fish are sorted based on weight, species, quality, and other factors, then iced and stored in auction coolers.

The online auction is held at 6 a.m., Monday through Friday. Seafood that has been displayed in the facilities in New England's three major ports, New Bedford, Boston, and Gloucester, can be bought at the same time, on the same auction screen.

Seafood is placed on the auction one species and market class at a time, with fish from all three locations available at once. A buyer can mix and match lots from the three display facilities in a single successful bid.

Before the auctions start, graders are able to examine the fish in the various locations to assess quality for prospective buyers. The system is an electronic "count up" auction system, the winning buyer can purchase up to 15,000 pounds of seafood from New Bedford, Boston, and Gloucester all with the same bid. Sellers have several seconds to accept or reject each bid.

Most of the auction's fish sells within 90 minutes. BASE New England also operates a scallop auction at 9 a.m.

An open house for customers, journalists, government officials, and friends will be held on Wednesday, December 7 from noon to 5 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

The first auction at BASE Gloucester will take place on Thursday, December 8 at 6 a.m.

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History of BASE

In 1996, brothers Richie and Raymond Canastra attended the European Seafood Show in Brussels, Belgium, where they learned about an electronic fish auction platform made by Icelandic company R.S.F. They later spent a month in Iceland tailoring the software to the needs of the U.S. market.

In 1997, the Canastras purchased the system from R.S.F. and launched The Buyers and Sellers Exchange, the company that operates the electronic auction system BASE. The system, which was the first electronic seafood display platform in the United States, processed more than 12 million pounds of seafood in 1997 and almost 16 million pounds in 1998, by which time buyers from as far as South Carolina were using the system.



History of Whaling City Seafood Display Auction

The roots of the Whaling City Seafood Display Auction, BASE New Bedford's predecessor, stretch to the late 1980s, when Fairhaven natives Richie and Raymond Canastra started a scallop offloading business on the New Bedford waterfront.

The brothers named their business RCC Foods Inc., and expanded into offloading groundfish boats — the type that land New England species like cod, haddock, pollock, and flounder. The company also expanded into fish cutting and processing, and eventually employed 150 staff.

The company's early success came partly from strong relationships Raymond built with members of New Bedford's fishing community during the 14 years he worked as a commercial fisherman.

In 1994, the Canastras launched Whaling City Seafood Display Auction after the closure of New Bedford's city-owned fish auction.

Whaling City operates a display auction, a format that was common in Europe but relatively new to the United States in the 1990s. Fish graders can view the catch and buyers can bid on fish at daily auctions.

In 1997, the Canastras launched the Buyers and Sellers Exchange (BASE), an electronic auction platform that lets buyers place bids remotely.

On a typical day, Whaling City auctions several hundred thousand pounds of fish and as much as 100,000 pounds of scallops.

The company expanded in 2008 with a new fish auction at the Marine Industrial Park in Boston's seafood processing district.

This week, the Canastras announced the creation of BASE New England, which uses the BASE computer system to integrate operations of existing fish display auctions in New Bedford and Boston — now called BASE New Bedford and BASE Boston — and a new display facility, in Gloucester.

The Gloucester operation, called BASE Gloucester, will be owned and operated by Chris, Vito Jr., and Nick Giacalone, with advice from their father, longtime Gloucester fisherman Vito Giacalone, Sr.



History of Fisherman's Wharf

The Fisherman's Wharf building sits on a peninsula on Harbor Cove in Gloucester and had been owned by a group of Sicilian immigrants since at least the early 1950s. The building operated as a fishing co-op, where fishermen unloaded their catch and loaded fuel and supplies. The owners built a new steel structure at the site after the building was destroyed by fire in 1998.

Vito Giacalone, a Gloucester fisherman, purchased part ownership of the property in 2003, by which time the wharf was largely vacant. He acquired full ownership in 2007, and started working on a plan to rebuild a thriving fish business at the site.

Vito enlisted help from his sons, who in 2008 started a fish unloading company, which supplied the Boston Seafood Display Auction.

This week, the Fisherman's Wharf building transforms once again. On Wednesday, the Giacalone family and Richie and Raymond Canastra, owners of Whaling City Seafood Display Auction in New Bedford, will open a fish display facility at the site called BASE Gloucester. Fish displayed at BASE Gloucester will be sold through the Buyers and Sellers Exchange of New England auction, held every weekday. Giacalone's sons will continue operating their fish offloading business under a new name, Fisherman's Wharf Gloucester.



Vito Giacalone, Sr.

Longtime Gloucester fisherman, Vito Giacalone, Sr., will help manage BASE Gloucester, a new fish display facility that launches this week. Fish displayed at BASE Gloucester will be sold through the Buyers and Sellers Exchange of New England auction, held every weekday. He also owns the property on Harbor Cove in Gloucester where the facility will operate.

Vito's roots in the fishing industry run deep. His grandfather, a Sicilian immigrant, and his father fished from Gloucester. Vito, 52, started fishing when he was in high school. He spent a few years working as a house builder, but returned to fishing in 2000.

In 2003, Vito purchased part of the Fisherman's Wharf building on Harbor Cove, a building that had been owned by Sicilian immigrants and had long been a fish offloading facility. He acquired complete ownership of the building in 2007. In 2008, his sons Chris, Vito Jr., and Nick, began a fish offloading business at the site.

Vito's sons will continue to operate their fish offloading business, which has been renamed Fisherman's Wharf Gloucester.

Vito also works to promote the commercial fishing industry as government affairs officer at Gloucester-based advocacy group Northeast Seafood Coalition.



Raymond Canastra

Raymond Canastra, 53, is co-owner of the Whaling City Seafood Display Auction and part owner of BASE New England, an organization that runs fish auctions in New Bedford, Gloucester and Boston.

Ray was born in New Bedford, Mass., and grew up in the nearby town of Fairhaven, attending local schools.

Ray, who now lives in Rochester, Mass., learned about the fishing industry through childhood friends, whose fathers owned fishing boats based in New Bedford.

But Ray's early interest was football, and he played in college until sidelined by an injury. He left school and, at the urging of a friend's father, joined the Fish Lumpers Union in New Bedford, a job that involved offloading fishing boats.

While working, Ray started helping fishing boat crews fix their gear. He helped out for free, hoping to someday land a more-lucrative job on a fishing boat. He kept a seabag packed, and was ready to go if offered a job.

Ray's break came when he was offered a job fishing for scallops on the vessel Poseidon. Canastra fished on the vessel for five years, and was later a boat captain.

After fishing for 14 years, Ray started a fish unloading business called RCC Foods with a few partners, including his brother, Richie. Later, the business expanded to include 150 employees, a fish cutting and processing facility, and an auction in Boston. On December 7, 2011, the company launched BASE New England.



Richie Canastra

Richie Canastra, 50, of Dartmouth, Mass., is co-owner of the Whaling City Seafood Display Auction and part-owner of regional fish auction organization BASE New England.

Richie started his career working as a snack food salesman for The Bachman Company in Reading, PA. At the age of 25, he purchased from Bachman the rights to be the sole wholesaler for the company in southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

In the late 1980s, he started a fish offloading business with his brother Raymond, who had worked for 14 years as a New Bedford fisherman.

The brothers later started Whaling City Seafood Display Auction in New Bedford, and on December 7, 2011 launched BASE New England, which runs seafood auctions in New Bedford, Gloucester and Boston.

Richie is also active as a leader in the fishing industry. He is the Vice Chair of the New Bedford Harbor Development Commission, the South Coast representative on the Massachusetts Seaport Advisory Council, the Chairman of the Board of Saving Seafood, a founding member of the (New Bedford) Mayor's Ocean and Fishery Council, the Treasurer of the Northeast Seafood Coalition, and a groundfish advisor to the New England Fisheries Management Council. Earlier this year Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick appointed him a Commissioner of the Massachusetts Seafood Marketing Council.

Richie is also a private pilot, and volunteers with Angel Flight Northeast, a nonprofit group that flies medical patients to hospitals for treatment.



Chris Giacalone, 28, attended Salem State University. He worked as an electrician prior to joining his brothers in co-managing the Gloucester offloading operations for the Canastra's Boston Seafood Display Auction (BSDA).

Vito Giacalone Jr., 26, attended Mt. Ida College and Salem State University. He operated as an independent landscaping contractor and fished on the family owned trawler, Jenny G, before joining his brothers to co-manage the Gloucester offloading operations for the BSDA.

Nick Giacalone, 24, attended Endicott College before coming to work to help complete the refitting of the family fishing vessel, Jenny G. He later fished on the vessel until joining his brothers to co-manage the Gloucester offloading operations for the BSDA.

Marc Giacalone, 19, is currently attending Endicott College and working part time at Fisherman's Wharf Gloucester while completing college.