



July 27, 2026

Celia C. Knight
President, Board of Directors
Maine Lobster Festival

Dear Ms. Knight:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 10.4 million members and supporters globally, including over 34,000 in Maine—with a suggestion: Given the growing recognition that lobsters are sentient animals who can feel pain and distress, we'd like to urge you to rebrand the Maine Lobster Festival as "The Red Death Festival" to honestly reflect the suffering that lobsters endure during this spectacle. Please allow me to elaborate.

Scientific evidence shows that because lobsters do not enter a protective state of shock when injured as humans do, they can feel the full agony of being steamed alive. Yet every year, this event celebrates the torturous deaths of approximately 16,000 lobsters. Just as it would be unacceptable to steam a human or a dog while still alive, it is unacceptable to do so to a lobster. As you may know, countries such as Austria, New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland have banned cooking lobsters alive, and doing so will also soon be illegal in the U.K.

If the festival is unwilling to remove lobsters from the menu, it should at least be transparent about the suffering at its heart, rather than using "family-friendly" branding. To put the morbidity front and center, we also suggest renaming the main attractions. Instead of the Big Parade, hold the *Parade of Lost Claws*, a solemn funeral march winding through rows of lobster silhouettes. Also, replace the International Great Crate Race with *Trapped Time*, in which contestants see how long they can tolerate sitting inside a replica trap before choosing freedom. And rather than the Lobster Eating Contest, try *The Heat Challenge*, in which visitors experience progressively higher heat levels until they become unbearable.

Renaming this festival and its attractions would be a step toward transparency and empathy, although the truly humane solution would be to end it altogether. Maine's maritime heritage, such as shipbuilding, could be celebrated without cruelty to living beings. Just as whaling ended, so too must the Maine Lobster Festival. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

Ingrid Newkirk
Founder

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Washington

1536 16th St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles

2624 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
323-644-PETA

Norfolk

501 Front St.
Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-PETA

Info@peta.org
PETA.org

Entities

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)