

Submission Guidelines

Thanks for your interest in contributing to the magazine of Maine. *Down East* is an identity magazine for Mainers and for anyone whose heart and soul are fed by our state and state of mind. Since 1954, our mission has been simple: to hold a mirror up to Maine, showcasing its landscapes, traditions, flinty character, and unhurried way of life, as well as to confront its complexities intelligently and with heart. We believe rusticity and cool can live side by side — because they do in Maine. Balancing reverence and playfulness, each issue furthers our readers' appreciation and understanding of the Maine mystique.

We're always looking for new ideas and perspectives. There are a few things a prospective contributor should know:

- *Down East* accepts unsolicited queries and manuscripts. Roughly a third of our content is assigned as the result of freelance pitches.
- Everything we publish is directly related to the state of Maine — its culture, history, personalities, destinations, current events, and more. We are unlikely to respond to submissions that do not have a clear and strong connection to Maine. If the idea you're pitching could be covered by another city/regional magazine elsewhere in the country (e.g., the resurgence in the popularity of contra dancing, the scourge of student loan debt, an explanation of a fishing technique), it will not be a good fit for us.
- Submissions can be sent to editorial@downeast.com or to our individual editors. We prefer to receive pitches and submissions by email. Unless we are interested in pursuing a story, we will not respond to pitches or submissions sent by postal mail, and we assume no responsibility for unsolicited photos or manuscripts. Unless you have a previous relationship with an editor, please do not call our offices to pitch a story by phone — it makes it difficult to give your ideas the attention they deserve, and it's much harder to circulate a pitch among other editors.
- It's helpful if pitches are accompanied by two or three clips, attachments or links, to give us an idea of your writing style. Manuscripts should be sent as attachments, compatible with Microsoft Word, or using Google Docs.
- We try to respond to all pitches within two weeks and all unsolicited submissions within three months. Please nudge us with an email if you haven't received a response in that time.

- We do not accept unsolicited poetry or fiction.
- Payment varies, between \$.60/word and \$.75/word, depending on the complexity of the assignment and intended use in the magazine. We pay a flat \$400 for My Maine essays (see below).

Down East has four departments, all open to pitches, all of which contain stories and items from 100 to 800 words in length.

NORTH BY EAST is our opening section: potpourri-ish, newsy, often a little offbeat, it's an eclectic selection of vignettes about Maine life. This is also our department for short-form coverage of arts and culture. Many items are something other than straight narrative or reportage — lists or graphic items, for instance. Recent NxE pieces have focused on [an aerospace startup butting heads with lobstermen over a proposed launch site](#) and on [a rookie sensation on Portland's G-League basketball team](#). Address pitches to deputy editor Sarah Stebbins: sstebbins@downeast.com.

FOOD & DRINK covers Maine's food, dining, nightlife, and liquid culture, plus food pathways like farming, fishing, aquaculture, and foraging. We do not accept pitches for restaurant reviews or recipes. Recent F&D items have included a [visit to a water-buffalo creamery](#) and check-in with [Maine's oldest greasy spoon](#). Address pitches to deputy editor Sarah Stebbins: sstebbins@downeast.com.

GOOD THINGS FROM MAINE covers material culture: products and crafts, retail and enterprise, makers and artisans. Recent GTFM pieces have included a [profile of a Maine musician turned pyrographer](#) and a [roundup of Maine-made charcuterie boards](#). Address pitches to deputy editor Sarah Stebbins: sstebbins@downeast.com.

MAINE HOMES focuses on Maine dwellings and design, architecture, real estate, gardening, sustainability, lodging, and policy. Pitches for the recurring Home Tour item should include scouting images. Recent MH pieces have included a tour of [an unexpected urban garden](#) and a report on why Maine is a [fertile ground for a boom in accessory dwelling units](#). Address pitches to deputy editor Sarah Stebbins: sstebbins@downeast.com.

We are also open to pitches for our middle of the book FEATURETTES, reported 1,000–2,200-word stories on a variety of topics, from policy to history to natural resources. Recent stories have included a history piece

on a [championship basketball team made up of the children of immigrants](#) and a [dive into the scourge of browntail moths](#). Address pitches to editor in chief Will Grunewald: wgrunewald@downeast.com.

MY MAINE is our section most open to new contributors, and the only section for which we prefer to read completed manuscripts rather than assigning on the basis of a pitch. My Maine stories are personal essays of 800–1,500 words that focus on some aspect of the writer's relationship to Maine and the Maine landscape. Pieces are often lyrical, sometimes humorous, and almost always have a strong first-person component: see recent examples [here](#) and [here](#). Send pitches to editorial@downeast.com. We receive more than 100 My Maine submissions a year and publish only 4 to 8. Please give us three months to respond to your My Maine submission before following up.

The best way to get a sense of what we look for in a FEATURE pitch is to read through several recent issues. Recent features assigned from pitches include [this profile of a prolific seed collector](#), this [community rendering of Peaks Island in winter](#), and this look at [the dying \(?\) vocation of groundfishing in a midcoast harbor town](#). Almost never is a *Down East* feature simply explanatory (e.g., a description of moose mating habits, an account of some historical event). **Service features** (e.g., **Best of Maine**, **travel guides**, **new restaurant roundups**) are written almost exclusively **in-house** or assigned to our regular contributing writers. *Down East* features run anywhere from 1,000 words for a photo-heavy piece to upwards of 6,000 words. Most feature stories fall between 2,000 and 4,000 words. Address pitches to editor in chief Will Grunewald or deputy editor Will Grunewald: wgrunewald@downeast.com or sstebbins@downeast.com.

A few tips for a successful submission:

- *Down East* runs a three-month lead time, and we often have stories assigned much farther out, particularly seasonal features. A pitch with a strong tie to November, for example, should be received no later than August, and a feature pitch much earlier.
- Particularly in our feature well, we place a lot of importance on accompanying visuals. It's helpful if your pitch mentions what kind of images you envision accompanying your story.
- Please consult at least a few back issues before submitting. Submissions that show little familiarity with the magazine have a low chance of success.

- The more recently we've covered a topic, the less likely we are to revisit it.
- Submissions should be targeted to a specific section of the magazine. If you can't tell us where in our pages you feel your idea would fit, it makes it harder to see it as a story for us.
- The key questions your pitch needs to answer are why is this interesting to people who love Maine? and why is this interesting right now? The existence of a great restaurant or a lovely store is not by itself a story. Give us a hook, timely or otherwise.
- Attention to detail helps us thin the herd of submissions. The name of our magazine is *Down East*. (It's not, for example, *Downeast* or *DownEast*.) Getting the name of the magazine wrong in a pitch doesn't inspire confidence. (You'd be surprised how often it happens!)

Thanks again for your interest in contributing to *Down East*!