



the thirty-a REVIEW™

a review of 30-A's finest people • places • things

annual dining guide

INSIDE:

Reviews of the finest and most delicious eating establishments on 30-A
Profiles of the farmers who give our chefs their bounty
Airstream dining in Seaside
Nightlife on 30-A

Edward's Fine Food & Wine in Rosemary Beach

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Sandcastle Escapes and Carbon Footprints: How One Local Business is Making a Difference

While going green grows beyond trend status, many businesses have yet to discover how to infuse these practices into their operations, particularly in the vacation rental industry. Sandcastle Escapes Vacations Rentals in South Walton is one of the businesses that has made the brave leap.

Sandcastle Escapes' first steps to incorporating sustainable practices in their business operations started several years back, explains Chandler Williams, Director of Housekeeping and Maintenance. "We understood that it would be a huge and continuous undertaking when we started those first steps towards improving our environmental impact, but we knew we had to do it. Guests don't come here for the shops and activities alone; it is the attraction to the pure untouched environment, the powdery white sand, the emerald green waters, the nature preserves, and endless bike and hiking paths."

Williams began to reduce the company's carbon footprint by modifying the housekeeping process and procedures for Sandcastle Escapes. This included cutting down on paper usage as well as switching to all-electronic communication for housekeeping and maintenance. "The maintenance department began sending work orders via email, while housekeeping schedules are emailed instead of printed," adds Williams. In rental units, the housekeeping staff uses refillable bottles for cleaning supplies rather than continuously purchasing new cleaners to be thrown away after each use. They've also eliminated the usage of plastic bags when transporting linens to and from the laundry department. Instead, housekeepers utilize reusable plastic storage bins and the linen is returned for cleaning in cloth laundry bags.

A big part of using less energy and

materials involves doing more local business. Purchased directly from local Publix grocery stores, Sandcastle Escapes toilet paper and paper towels are Greenwise, made out of 100% recycled materials. This eliminates shipping, reducing the company's carbon footprint while also giving back to the local community. Unused food and household items left in the homes are donated to local food banks for distribution at their consent. When towels become unusable, they are donated to the Alaqua Animal Refuge for use in their animal rescue efforts. "We hope that we can help out the community with things that are usually discarded by donating them for others to use," states Williams.

"All reservations, confirmations, deposits, payments and check-in instructions are sent via email. This eliminates the printing of over ten pages of documents and three different mail outs," says Audrey Price, Director of Sandcastle Escapes. "Homeowners on our partner program receive statements via email and rental income is direct-deposited rather than printed on paper checks. Owners also have the option to log on to the website to check the status of their rental property and download past monthly statements."

For Sandcastle Escapes' President, Taylor Williams, going green was more than a business approach, it was a personal feeling and a social responsibility. "To me, it makes sense to conserve resources. It helps us be more efficient, but it's also important for us as a company to come together and make a difference. This has become standard practice for us and shows how easy it is to make a positive impact. We can all be part of the effort."

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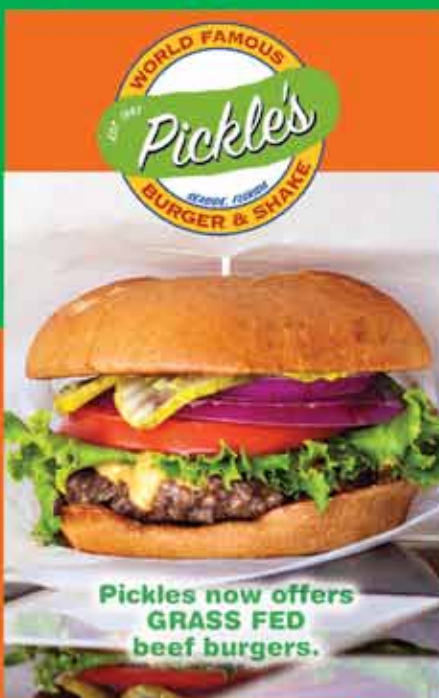
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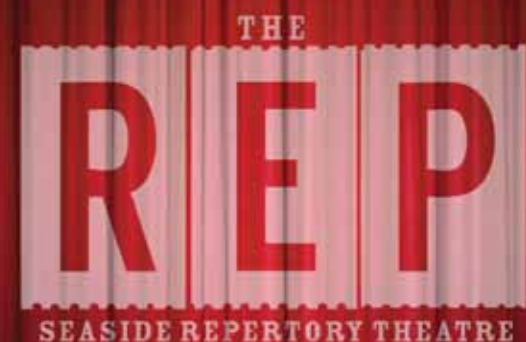


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letter from the publisher

THE MAGIC



30-A has a certain mysterious quality about it. As soon as you arrive, you feel it. Perhaps it is the power of the ocean so close and accessible by foot. Perhaps it is the quality of the people who call 30-A home or the wonderful visitors that we get here every year. Regardless of the source, the magic is unmistakable.

It is therefore not surprising that this magic is transcended into every other aspect of the area. It's evident throughout, whether it is the uniqueness of the retail shops, the colors and textures of the artists' work in local galleries, or the exquisite dining up and down our blessed highway.

This issue, as you might have guessed already, is dedicated to the latter. That is, the chefs, farmers, and servers in our various dining establishments peppered up and down the beach, which give our taste buds a magic experience. Whether it's the most humble of airstream kitchens or the most sophisticated fine dining kitchen, the good establishments always have one thing in common; a desire to serve up delicious food with your satisfaction and a dedication to the culinary arts in mind.

Every good chef will tell you the same thing: The magic is in the ingredients. The simplest of preparations will yield up deliciousness in the hands of a competent chef who has fresh, sustainable, quality ingredients. In this vein, we have highlighted the many farmers and providers who give the local chefs the fuel to their creativity. Without these dedicated agriculturalists in the region, we simply could not eat as well as we do. We thank you for your hard work and for your focus on providing the area with sustainable, local ingredients and in many cases, organic farming.

Within these pages, you'll find a fairly comprehensive coverage of what we consider to be 30-A's Finest Dining. Inevitably, we have left some of the little gems out. We apologize in advance and we encourage you to contact us by email to tell us about your favorite spots that we might have missed.

In the meantime, we wish you all a very prosperous, healthy, and happy year.

Here's to eating your way up and down 30-A.

Cheers,

Miles K. Neiman

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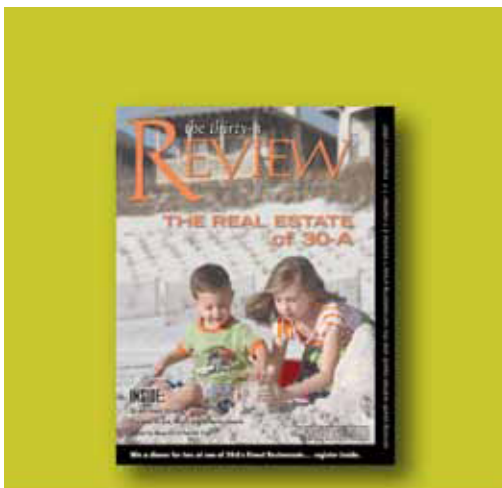
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fine dining

Bentley's and Maddog's Restaurant

BY ANNE SCHULTZ

Long sunny days, warm temperatures, and flower-scented breezes make sublime coastal settings for any spring celebration like a wedding or graduation. To enhance these joyous occasions, Bentley's and Maddog's Restaurant—a new kid on the block—dives into the 30-A culinary scene, making splashes with exquisite cuisine and elegant presentation. Husband Bill and I check things out with owners Kandy and Chef John Malocsay over dinner.

“We were looking for another location for Bentley's when we came upon Rosemary Beach. I walked down streets reminding me of Europe and when I came to the manicured green leading to the Gulf, I knew this is where I wanted to live,” says Kandy. “We have operated Bentley's in Islamorada for the past 20 years and wanted to move closer to our horse farm in Auburn where I grew up.”

Instead of “born with the proverbial silver spoon”, I picture Chef John growing up with whisk in hand beating egg whites in a copper bowl as a third-generation restaurant owner and chef. Learning to make a sauce in John's culinary family was as common as learning to ride a bike in other households. His grandfather owned the famed Saddle River Inn in New Jersey, and his father ran a restaurant in Stuart, Florida for 35 years. “It's what we love, it's our heart,” he shares.

“I want everyone who comes in here to have whatever they want. Whatever they're in the mood for, we can make it happen,” John explains when I try and pin him down to his style. I get the feeling cooking is an art here and I'm dealing with an artist perfected in classical techniques, who ventures out like an impressionist using imagination, innovation, and experimentation to make food even tastier. “You just have to taste it,” he says.

While waiting for appetizers, I take in my surroundings. A soothing atmosphere is achieved with high ceilings, a spacious interior, and earth-toned walls decorated with original art and photography of marine life and seascapes. Candlelight glows and background music plays softly. After serving Yellow Fin Tuna Wasabi, our friendly waiter shows us photos of his 2-week old daughter. We

feel right at home as we crunch into a crisp shell layered with bright-green seaweed seasoned with ginger and wasabi and crowned with chunks of raw tuna. We sample fried eggplant over spinach topped with crabmeat dribbled with a lemon caper sauce and finished off with

Kandy explains how the restaurant's name reflects its spirit. “We chose Maddog's because it's the name of a popular Miami Dolphin football player and for our beloved black lab; a zany free spirit who plays Frisbee on the beach. The playful spirit infuses our 4:00p.m. to 10p.m. family menu offering reasonable prices so families can bring children and relax. We have a 10 item kid's menu with mac and cheese, chicken fingers, the whole 9 yards.”

The adult menu offers an extensive seafood array of lobster, crab, shrimp, and scallops: all served in luscious innovative ways. We scan the menu for our main course and I decide on In the Weeds: snapper nestled in shrimp, crab, and artichoke hearts in a spinach cream sauce. My side is a Drunken Potato: a huge sweet potato sitting in a pool of brown sugar syrup! My fish is moist with a springy texture, its sweetness enhanced, not masked, by the sauce. My husband orders certified Angus beef New York Strip, accompanied by twice-baked potato and fresh asparagus. John's lifetime immersion in cooking has produced stellar masterpiece results. Talented Chef Bruce Rew finishes off our meal with a tray of in-house desserts: Fried Strawberries, Crème Brulee, and a praline cheesecake.

All are addictive combinations of sweetness and crunchiness.

Eat lunch or dinner at Bentley's & Maddog's 30A where every meal is a celebration. Soon you'll be old friends with the newest kids on the block.

Bentley's & Maddog's 30A is located at 10343 E. County Highway 30A, Seacrest Beach. Call (850) 231-1007 for reservations and information. Early dining is from 11:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Bentley's is closed Mondays until March and is open 7 days a week in season.



Chefs John Malocsay and Bruce Rew - Thirty-years in the Florida Keys making delicious, fresh food that shows respect for the food's true flavor.

Bud & Alley's

Where Unpretentious Gulf Coast Cuisine Reigns Supreme

BY SUSAN BENTON

Dave Rauschkolb, an avid poker player, took a big gamble the day he and friend Scott Witcoski said, “Yes!” to Robert Davis when asked to open a restaurant in Seaside. In those days Scenic 30-A was just a quiet coastal road and Seaside a lonely outpost. It was 1985 and Davis approached Witcoski, a seasoned chef at 24, and Rauschkolb, a marketing and management student who waited tables and bartended, about taking over the space where a former French restaurant stood in Seaside. Once the surfing duo looked out at the porch and gazed at the emerald Gulf waters, Rauschkolb says, “It felt like home,” and within 24 hours the young men were embarking on a culinary journey of a lifetime.

From the start, Rauschkolb oversaw the front of the house and Witcoski honed his already impressive skills as the Executive Chef. Everything was working out well for them except a name. Rauschkolb says, “It seemed crazy at the time, but Scott said we should name the restaurant after his cat Alley, and Robert’s dachshund, Bud.”

A quarter of a century later, Bud & Alley’s Restaurant is still a favorite of locals and tourists alike, serving up some of the best regional cuisine in the Panhandle; unpretentious and casual. Rauschkolb says, “The philosophy of the restaurant has remained the same; to serve the freshest, locally available food prepared simply. We are so fortunate to have an abundance of the freshest seafood right in our back yard.”

Bud & Alley’s is South Walton’s longest established restaurant, and sits at the heart of Seaside’s central district, nestled on the Gulf Dunes overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. Chef Dave Bishop is at the kitchen’s helm, serving incredible cuisine in a comfortable fine dining atmosphere. Chef prepared for me the fresh catch of the day (red snapper) baked whole with capers and lemon, certainly something to behold, and a dish of succulent and perfectly prepared Ahi Tuna, which is a popular menu



Offering the freshest of Gulf seafood, Bud & Alley’s signature recipes include lump-crab cakes and BBQ Shrimp. The Roof Deck offers the full menu and a sunny or shaded table depending on the season.



item at lunch and dinner. I shared the crispy pan-fried Crab Cakes, packed with lump crab so moist and delicate, it is no wonder that Bud & Alley’s has garnered numerous awards, including Florida Trend Magazines Golden Spoon Hall of Fame Award, an honor only reserved for 30 Florida restaurants. Chef Emeril Lagasse, also a fan of Bud & Alley’s, recently filmed a segment for his new show with Rauschkolb and Bishop that will be aired in January 2013 on the Cooking Channel, called Emeril’s Florida.

Just steps from the front door and up the stairs to Bud & Alley’s rooftop Deck, guests can enjoy their meals in an open-air setting with spectacular and unparalleled panoramic views of Seaside and the Gulf of Mexico. A favorite locals’ hangout for sunset cocktails and photo opportunities, the rooftop is always crowded with customers enjoying the scenery before the sun dips behind the horizon. Each night at sunset, the bartenders

participate in a beloved tradition of ringing a cast iron bell from an 1888 steam train. This is the place to linger and savor hand-cut sweet potato fries, or an order of smoked tuna dip with lavash crackers and an ice-cold beer before ordering a memorable dinner; a memory you will want to relive time and again.

After all of the years and rave reviews, Bud & Alley’s mantra still holds steadfast: Good Food-Good People-Good Times. Rauschkolb says, “I am honored to be here and that people speak of Bud & Alley’s with such fondness. We have had the pleasure of being the place of so many wonderful memories for so very long. I eagerly look forward to the next

10 or 20 years in Seaside!”

Bud & Alley’s is located in Seaside, at 2236 East Highway 30-A, and can be reached by phone at (850) 231-5900 or by email at info@budandalleys.com. Visit their website at www.budandalleys.com to make reservations, or to view the live webcam of Seaside beach and Bud and Alley’s Rooftop Deck. Lunch is available from 11:30 am to 3pm daily, and dinner is served 5:30 pm to 10 pm. The Rooftop Deck is open from 11:30 am until late into the night. In winter months, closing times may vary.



Susan Benton is the owner of 30AEATS.com where she shares her passion for food and travel, and her commitment to promoting

local farmers, chefs, artisans and restaurants along the Gulf Coast.



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Bud & Alley's Pizza Bar: Your Next Great Meal

BY SUSAN BENTON

Local restaurateur Dave Rauschkolb has a passion for food and life. In 2007, as the owner of the iconic Bud & Alley's restaurant, located in the heart of Seaside, Florida, he decided to mix things up a bit. He took a trip with local architect Leo Casas south of the border and to San Diego, in search of the most authentic Mexican cuisine. Rauschkolb returned home and opened a traditional Mexican taqueria to rave reviews. It was aptly named Bud & Alley's Taco Bar, situated literally next to his primary restaurant.

room is warm and cozy, filled with design touches by Rauschkolb's wife Carol (of Carol Murphy Design), such as the antique pizza peels perfectly arranged on the wall.

Manager Joe Beane says, "Many customers rave about the tomato red recycled chairs made from plastic coke bottles." The crisp and modern bar area, located in the front of the eatery, allows for a journey of the senses, as diners can watch made-from-scratch pizza dough fly high the air, hand-tossed and lovingly topped with fresh local ingredients, before a quick bake in the wood-fired

cheeses, and flour from Italy, to deliver the most authentic taste. Though the choice was difficult, we decided on the Margherita and Salami Napoli Pizze, to which Manager Beane replies, "This is by far my favorite, but you can't go wrong with any of them!" Layered with Felino Salami, local honey, red pepper flakes, and fresh mozzarella, it was spicy, sweet and sublime.

Bud & Alley's Pizza Bar features an incredible selection of authentic Italian inspired menu items that still stay true to Rauschkolb's culinary commitment to serving fresh local fare. The offerings include a wide array of antipasti dishes, seasonal vegetables, artisan cheeses and cured meats, fresh salads, local seafood, hearty pasta dishes, and special pastas prepared for children. There is great comfort in knowing that Rauschkolb offers honest food, simply prepared with care, in a beautiful setting, served with an abundance of warm Southern hospitality.



The wood-burning oven is the centerpiece of the Pizza Bar's open kitchen. The menu offers hearty pasta dishes, artisan cheeses and sliced meats, seafood, the freshest salads and seasonal vegetables, and a variety of authentic Napoli-style pizzas.

In 2009 the urge for a different cuisine struck again, but this time Rauschkolb found himself hungry for Italian. Rauschkolb and Casas teamed up and headed to Rome, Italy (where Casas studied architecture), with wives Carol and Tara. It was fortunate that the Casas, fluent in Italian, made the trip as the couples then traveled to Naples and the Isle of Ischia off the coast of Naples, talking with locals and gathering menu ideas along the way. Rauschkolb says, "We discovered a wonderful café overlooking the Mediterranean Sea that inspired the design for what would become Bud & Alley's Pizza Bar."

Nestled in the Gulf dunes on the western edge of Seaside, Bud & Alley's Pizza bar has splendid Gulf breezes from the outdoor shaded terrace with comfortable sofa seating, while the courtyard patio offers large farm tables for traditional Italian family-style dining and is a wonderful spot for people watching. The indoor dining

oven stoked with Southern oak. Rauschkolb says, "It only takes 60 seconds to cook one of our Napoli-style, thin crust, hand-tossed pizzas in the 750-degree wood fired oven."

Friend Lynn Nesmith (local writer, author, and Rauschkolb's publicist), met me for lunch on a dreary and cool beach afternoon. Prior to arrival, I was thinking about again ordering the scrumptious mussels I had enjoyed on my last visit; but we opted instead for a bowl of comforting lentil soup that warmed us quickly as we savored each hearty bite. Next up we sampled the Eggplant, Tomato and Goat Cheese Gratin served in a ramekin; the bright flavors and creamy mellow layers complemented each other well.

As is always the case with well-made Neapolitan pies, the ingredients make the difference. Bud & Alley's Pizza Bar uses fresh local produce, along with imported meats,



Bud & Alley's Pizza Bar is located on the western edge of Seaside at 2236 East County Hwy 30-A. Hours of operation are 11am to 10pm, seven days a week. Winter months may vary. They can be reached by phone at (850) 231-3113, or you can visit their website at www.budandalley.com.



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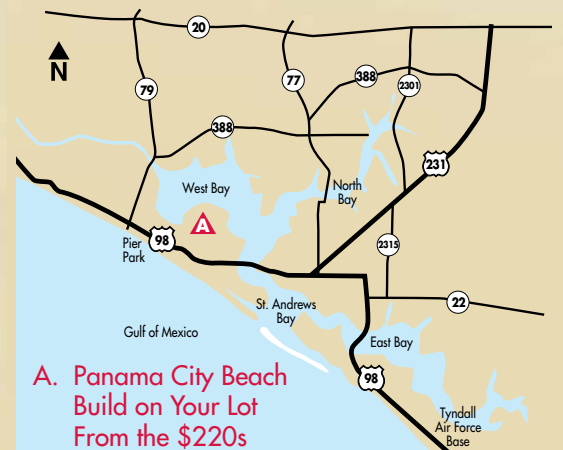


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Café Thirty-A

BY NEVILLE CARSON

It's hard not to love a place with an 18-item martini menu, so I didn't even try to play hard to get with Café Thirty-A. I just gave in and fell head over heels for the place. Café Thirty-A inspires that kind of affection in a lot of people—that's why it has thrived as a culinary landmark of the Scenic Highway by the sea.

There really are 18 martinis here. My Tanqueray martini (gin, vermouth, queen olives) was smooth as silk, poured from the shaker at our table, with a coating of tiny ice chips floating on the surface. My wife, Julie, had a Cosmo with the perfect sweet and tart balance that makes this drink so refreshing. We could have gotten adventurous with something like The Fraise d'Ete—Stoli Strasberi Vodka, strawberry/mint simple syrup, and a splash of pineapple juice—or been purists with The Dutch Ketel, which is Ketel One Vodka, Tom Olives, and nothing else. A beautiful wine list and an excellent selection of beers were also at our disposal.

The atmosphere at Café Thirty-A is designed to relax you without putting you to sleep. Giant fabric umbrellas soften the lights affixed to the open ceiling and the walls are painted a soft gray that's soothing in the low illumination. This mellow theme is offset by lively touches, such as large watercolors of fanciful fish adorning the walls and hammered metal chargers with fish-adorned rims on the tables. And speaking of the tables, the white tablecloths are protected by white restaurant paper, which is a relief if you're eating with a child (or a messy dining writer).

Having played in the sun most of the day, we were a hungry group, so the opener of truly hot, fresh, crusty bread with olive oil was received with universal praise. We hastened to order: Son Nicholas chose Grits and Sauteed Jumbo Lump Crabmeat; Julie a Margherita Pizza with a Pan-Seared Split Lobster Tail alongside; and I, Sesame Crusted Rare Yellowfin Tuna with a side of broccoli.

The grits Nicholas ordered are made with cream and butter and do not touch water. Combined with the succulent crabmeat, they are a treat to rival any entrée in the place, (which is saying something).

Julie's lobster tail was buttery and sweet while still retaining a hint of its salty ocean origins. Her pizza

was a work of art. It was a thin-crust affair, crisp from an 800-degree wood-fired oven. Generous toppings, including mozzarella cheese, heirloom tomatoes, roasted garlic, fresh basil, calamata olives, fennel, and capers made this an extraordinary pie. She took part of it home with us and the next morning pronounced it delicious even eaten stone cold out of the box.

The Yellowfin Tuna I ordered is one of Café Thirty-A's signature dishes, and well it should be. Served rare and enveloped in sesame seeds, this pan-seared delight was firm and flavorful. Keeping it company on the plate were edamame; peppers; and green, salmon-pink, and brown swirls of wasabi and oil. I ordered broccoli as well. It came lightly buttered and hot, and was pleasantly crunchy.

Our entrees devoured, it was on to dessert: Crème Brulee for Julie, and Banana Beignets, another signature



Martini



Pan Seared Diver Scallops



Roasted Beet Salad

dish, for me. Julie's classic dessert was in perfect form: crunchy brown on top with a hint of burnt caramel over smooth, tasty custard. As for the beignets, they didn't stay on the plate long. The chunks of banana, fried in beignet batter, were piping hot and dusted with confectioner's sugar. Bananas should grow on trees like this! On the side was macadamia nut ice cream fit for a king. The Café actually makes its own macadamia nut brittle and crushes it to go in the ice cream.

If you've never visited Café Thirty-A, do yourself a favor and make reservations. If you have been before, it's time to come back—the menu changes a little every day, so there's always something new to try.

Café Thirty-A, located at 3899 East Scenic Highway 30A in Seagrove Beach, is open seven days a week, serving dinner only starting at 5 p.m. For more information, call (850) 231-2166 or surf to www.cafethirtya.com.

Caliza Restaurant Poolside Dining and Much More at Alys Beach

BY LAUREN GALL



What makes a restaurant special? Perhaps it's the cuisine or the atmosphere...or possibly an exquisite combination of both to create the perfect dining experience. Caliza Restaurant at Alys Beach is a prime example of a restaurant striking the perfect balance between elegant and inviting surroundings and exceptional food to match.

Located in Alys Beach, one of the 15 beautiful beach communities in the Beaches of South Walton, Caliza Restaurant, under the direction of Chef de Cuisine Kevin Korman, offers a menu selection that is anything but ordinary. The restaurant is located poolside and near the gorgeous white sand beach as well, which offers visitors and locals a feeling as if they are on vacation...relaxing near the water and enjoying tasty cuisine.

Chef Kevin Korman began his career at 20 years of age, when he attended the Baltimore International College in Maryland. Korman was chosen as one of the top seven students in his class for an honors internship program at the school's hotel in County Cavan, Ireland. He trained and mentored under Certified Master Chef Rudy Speckhamp CMC (one of only 65 Master Chefs in the United States) for 4 years. During his time with the restaurant (Rudy's 2900), he worked with 15 other Certified Master Chefs. Upon leaving Rudy's, Chef Korman tailored his path to gain maximum experience in a wide variety of culinary fields. Korman worked



in restaurants, hotels, catering companies, retail, and culinary instruction before making his way back to the restaurant world and his true passion with fine dining. He has also worked for numerous celebrities and politicians, including but not limited to former President Bush and Vice President Cheney. Chef Korman joined the Caliza team in March of 2011 as Sous Chef, and was quickly promoted to Chef de Cuisine.

As for Caliza's ever-evolving menu, it reflects the water, local grown produce, and savory southern flavors; and it is based on availability and season. You can start your dining experience with such appetizing creations as Prince Edward Island Mussels, Jumbo Lump Crab Cake in a Maryland Crab Stew, or Fennel Crusted Meatball with Caponata and Gnocchi, just to name a few. For all of you pasta lovers, you might want to consider the Capellini Al Pomodoro or the Southern Orecchiette, served with pasta that is hand-cut and made in house.

Seafood lovers should get ready to feel the love as well when you can dine on such dishes as Sumac Marinated Shrimp, Black Squash, and Red Snapper with a Crab and Green Curry Risotto to die for! Diners can also select from beef and poultry dishes...can you really pass up the Lamb Loin in a Mushroom Crust, or Filet of Beef served with your choice of exceptional sides, such as Haricots Verts, Creamy Grits, or Grilled Asparagus? And if that isn't impressive enough, try one of Chef Korman's amazing desserts, such as the Dark Chocolate and Peanut Butter Pudding Cake or the Crème Brûlée Trio of pumpkin, apple cider, and maple bourbon served with Madeleins...a local favorite! Caliza Restaurant also offers a great wine selection, along with some exceptional specialty drinks and tasty libations.

Equally as impressive is the amazing architecture and environment at Caliza and Alys Beach. The Caliza dining experience is simply one of a kind and truly offers something for everyone... in a beautiful setting.

For more information about Caliza Restaurant and Alys Beach, visit www.calizarestaurant.com or call (850) 213-5700 to make reservations. Also, visit www.alysbeach.com and click on Caliza Restaurant or call, toll free, (866) 732-1760. Finally, be sure to arrive early so you

can relax and enjoy Caliza Restaurant's Happy Hour from 5:30 pm until 6:30 pm in the Bar and Lounge.

**** Caliza Restaurant is closed during winter but will re-open March 2013 for dining service. Catering is offered year round. For more information regarding catering services, please call (850) 213-5700.*

Edwards Fine Food and Wine

BY SUSAN BENTON



Salad Nicoise



Chef Edward



Steak Frites

Edward's Fine Food and Wine is a neighborhood restaurant that invites patrons to taste the sensational coastal flavors of its local seasonally inspired menu. This casual but sophisticated restaurant is located in the heart of the idyllic town of Rosemary Beach, Florida on 30-A, and offers seating inside their gorgeous dining room or outside in their private courtyard.

The courtyard is full of charm and boasts an herb garden, stunning fountain, an area for live music, and a central focus on the chef's bar. The beautiful interiors were thoughtfully designed with a mix of old world and modern, comfortable banquette seating, soothing color tones, and an attention to local artwork.

Executive Chef Edward Reese is a graduate of Johnson and Wales Culinary School in Charleston, South Carolina; a career he pursued after graduating from Ft. Walton Beach High School. He went on to work at the (former) Elephant Walk in Sandestin and was promoted to Executive Chef. Reese then moved to Birmingham, Alabama, and worked with famed Chef Frank Stitt, of the award-winning Bottega, and Highlands Bar and Grill restaurants.

Chef Reese longed to return to the Gulf Coast where his family was located and dreamed of one day opening his own restaurant. That dream became a reality January, 2012, when Chef Reese took over the space in Rosemary Beach and opened the doors to Edward's Fine Food and Wine just two months later.

Chef Reese says, "It all fell together, and truly is a dream come true for me. I want to pinch myself sometimes! People are loving the food, and I think it is due to the fresh and simple preparations."

Reese sources the restaurant's produce, including the tomatoes from Mac Farms in Point Washington and hydroponic lettuce from Cottondale Hydroponic. Fresh Gulf snapper, grouper, oysters, and clams are from Destin Ice and Water Street Seafood in Apalachicola. "I serve a fresh local product done right!" says Chef Reese.

The sous chef at Edward's Fine Food and Wine is John Wagner from the former Summer House Restaurant in Ft. Walton Beach. "We have the cream of the crop for staff, who came to us and wanted to work here. Wagner is excellent. I worked for him when I was in high school. Between us we have over sixty years of experience behind the counter!" Chef Reese says.

I serve a fresh local product done right!

The top selling dishes at Edwards are the grouper grilled simply with lemon, olive oil, and fresh herbs; and the Steak Frites - a grilled hanger steak with crispy potato frites. I tasted the crabcakes, which were exceptional, packed with fresh lump crab and just a small amount of panko breadcrumbs as a binder. The Baked Apalachicola oysters were succulent and one of my favorite menu items. Chef Reese says, "I am not about heavy sauces on my dishes. Whatever is fresh is on the plate."

Erin, Chef Reese's wife, says, "He wakes up in the morning inspired by what he will cook that day." Currently, his most inspired dish is the Pan Roasted Red Snapper with Shrimp and Butter Pea Dill Succotash, and Lemon Herb

Aioli. Chef Reese's dinner specials are served on Thursday nights and include hits like his Fish & Grits, which is fresh local Snapper served with Alabama sourced ground grits.

A distinctive well-selected wine list offering a wide palette is available by the glass and bottle. Though a children's menu is not provided, younger patrons will find favorites like mac & cheese, grilled cheese, and tomato soup on the menu.

Chef Reese says, "Business has already exceeded our projections for what we thought we would do the entire year. We are a local couple, and our six children are working with us. It was meant to be and could not have come together any better!"

Edwards Fine Food and Wine is located at 66 Main Street in Rosemary Beach, Florida, and will offer cooking classes in the fall and winter. They cater offsite, and offer private chef services and private parties at the restaurant. They do not take reservations, and can be reached by phone at (850) 231-0550, or by email at info@edwards.30a.com. Dinner is served Tuesday through Sunday from 5 pm to 11pm, and they are closed on Monday. In the summer, Edward's is open seven days a week.

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Fish Out of Water: The Ultimate in Gulf Front Dining

BY SAM MOORE

Dining waterside comes at a premium in South Walton, and much more so if it is fine dining. However, WaterColor's premiere flagship fine dining restaurant, Fish Out of Water, can take you there.

Take the stairs or elevator to the second-floor restaurant and expect to be wowed. The décor is old Hollywood and visually intriguing as you make your way through to the Sunset deck, which owns an unparalleled view of the emerald blue Gulf waters, white sand, and nature.

Of course, if you prefer dining in (possibly in one of the half-moon crescent booths), this is offered too. It's all up to the diner. Either way, expect to be wowed by the ambiance and view. After all, Fish out of Water is an award-winning 4-diamond restaurant.

On the menu, expect to find Gulf grouper adorned with blistered tomatoes and accompanied by corn pudding; Florida hopper shrimp with herb risotto and mushrooms; heritage pork chop, beluga lentils, and local collards; red snapper with local vegetables; wood grilled beef tenderloin in red wine jus; hanger steak with olive tapenade; bricked Amish chicken in preserved lemon garlic; and whole roasted fish with Meyer lemon relish.

"We only use domestic U.S. caught fish, lobster, and diver scallops in our recipes, according to season," says Chef de Cuisine Lawrence Klang.

After the entrée is done, the desserts are another wow, with items such as curd filled crepe; Plant City strawberry 'shortcake'; strawberry ice cream and whipped crème fraîche; local Meyer lemon pudding; lemon thyme gelato and huckleberry coulis; pastry crème and chocolate sauce; onyx chocolate molten cake; or caramel ice cream and coffee streusel.

The problem here might be in trying to make a decision.

A private dining room is available, lined with bottles from the restaurant's collection of wines. In addition to the restaurant and Sunset deck, in the lounge area specialty cocktails and wines are offered in a casually chic atmosphere. On the Sunset deck,

enjoy an unparalleled sunset view night- ly from 5:30-6:30 pm tuesday-Saturday with happy hour specials and a special appetizer menu.

In addition, Fish Out of Water is now serving breakfast, which also can be enjoyed while overlooking the



Snapper



Fantastic deck overlooking the Gulf

We only use domestic U.S. caught fish, lobster, and diver scallops in our recipes, according to season..)

Gulf. Try Shane's Shrimp and Grits, or a classic Quiche Lorraine, omelets, French toast, granola and fruit, from \$3 to \$15. No reservations are required and the dress is casual attire.

Breakfast hours are from 8 - 11 am and daily dinner hours are Tuesday - Thursday 5-9 pm and Friday-Saturday from 5-10 pm. Fish Out of Water will be closed during the month of January. For dining reservations call (850) 534-5050 or email concierge@watercolorresort.com.

George's at Alys Beach

BY NEVILLE CARSON



Wood Grilled Wild Salmon



Seared Sea Scallops with garden mint ravioli

The first things you notice upon entering George's at Alys Beach are the frogs. Fanciful amphibians peer at you from the walls, where they are depicted in a series of colorful paintings by Lisa Hinds. There is an intriguing set of frog-themed paraphernalia you can acquire. Significantly, there are great t-shirts with the restaurant's signature frog logo and "Misbehave/Behave" printed on them, a reference to the fact that George's offers spa-inspired food for the health conscious (the behavers) and more indulgent fare for those of us who prefer to misbehave a bit when we dine. At George's, the big idea is to serve a wide variety of culinary tastes.

use. Once they have decided on a direction, Chef Gregg creates the dishes himself, carefully crafting each one.

I arrived with wife Julie, son Nick, and Elisa Smith of the South Walton Tourist Development Council on a sparkling Friday afternoon. At the suggestion of our server Kelly, (super provider of service and advice), we decided to try the ginger tea. Let me urge you to do likewise. It's an iced drink, light green in color with a subtle, spicy flavor that's eminently refreshing. I can honestly say I've never had anything quite like it. After tasting Julie's, I set aside my beer so I could have a glass. There's no higher praise than that!

The variety and high quality of the food at George's at Alys Beach is the product of three great culinary talents: co-owners Ann and George Hartley, who spend part of their time traveling to places like France, Morocco, and California, picking up new food ideas all along the way; and general manager and Chef Gregg Smith. The Hartleys bring back their food inspirations and work through them with Chef Gregg, who

Elisa decided to have the Sesame Crab and Avocado Salad. This is the house's featured salad and it lives on the behave side of the menu. Made with organic greens, the salad is dressed with tangy Asian vinaigrette dressing, which sets off the flavors of the large lumps of crabmeat and slices of avocado that are generously apportioned throughout the dish.

Once Nick saw the Seafood Basket on the misbehave menu, that was all she wrote. This treasure trove is loaded with fried oysters, fried shrimp, hushpuppies, and French fries, and comes with a choice of coleslaw or potato salad. If you prefer, you can get the seafood wood-grilled instead of fried. Everything on this plate was fresh and delicious. I had to do some tough negotiating to get a few bites, but it was worth it.

The Wild Salmon BLT Wrap, from the behave side of the menu of course, was Julie's choice. Wise decision! Wood-grilled salmon and applewood smoked bacon is one of the finest duos to come along since Rodgers and Hammerstein. The fresh, rich salmon combines with the smoky bacon in this packed wrap for an entrée that's entirely satisfying without being the least bit heavy. The greens, tomato, and guacamole in the dish make a perfect background for the leading flavors.

As for me, I just had to try the Fried Oyster Tacos, a new item on the George's menu. The oysters were wonderful but, not to take away from them, it was the slaw that made the dish. It wasn't just any slaw—it was jalapeno slaw, and it gave a terrific zest to the meal. As if that weren't enough, playing counterpoint to the zing of the slaw was the tang of pickled red onions that are also included. I thoroughly enjoyed this dish, along with my side of chili-hot beans, served atop a bed of greens.

George's does a superb job of providing the three ingredients of a great dining experience—setting, service, and food. The result is, regardless of what you order here, you're going to leave hoppy. Enjoy!



Chef Gregory Smith and family

George and Ann Hartley also own LaCocina Mexican Grill and Bar, and the Seagrove Village MarketCafe. George's at Alys Beach is located just off Scenic Highway 30A at 30 Castle Harbour Drive, Alys Beach. Lunch is served 11 a.m.—3 p.m. and dinner 5—9 p.m., Monday—Saturday (closed Sunday). To-go orders are available. For more information, call (850) 641-0017, or surf to www.georgesatalysbeach.com.

La Crema Tapas and Chocolate

BY DEBBIE MCCHESENEY

My husband and I were seated at a sidewalk table not 20 steps from the cobblestone street in a beautiful courtyard under a slight crescent moon.

The menu reads: “**Tapas**- Small plates meant to be shared among friends”

How fitting that Kim and Kevin Neel met while waiting tables at the Macaroni Grill in Tampa; and how fortunate for those of us along 30-A that Kevin decided to hang up his banker’s tie, leave it in Atlanta, and move to Rosemary Beach. Then, while watching “Spain on the Road Again” one lazy Saturday morning, the Neels decided they just had to go to Spain. That trip to Barcelona not only changed their lives but the flavor and vibe along Main Street, Rosemary Beach with their new tapas restaurant, La Crema.

La crema means “the cream”. Kevin says, “It is the perfect name for us: the outside of the courtyard building is cream stucco, the interior is decorated in a old European cream-colored style, the frothy chocolate has cream, and we are a tow-headed cream colored family, including our dog, Louie.”

My husband and I were seated at a sidewalk table not 20 steps from the cobblestone street in a beautiful courtyard under a slight crescent moon. The candles flickered on every bistro table as conversation buzzed throughout the restaurant, all coming together making you feel like you are on the streets of Spain. And this was before the food arrived.

Ham wrapped figs, stuffed with goat cheese and topped with a drizzle of honey, right along side a plate of mushrooms stuffed with lobster in a delicate cream sauce; these are among the many savory small plates



Various delicacies at La Crema



offered up under the star-filled sky. I knew right away we had stumbled on to someplace special. La Crema uses all fresh, organic produce and local products. Their coffee, my personal favorite, is from Amavida. Kevin serves only Spanish wines, remaining loyal to the restaurant’s short but sweet Spanish heritage.

Appetites whetted, we wasted no time digging into the crispy Spanish eggplant, which tasted like the best French toast in the world; and the croquettes, which were stuffed with a creamy blend of ham and cheese. The croquettes alone could make for a wholesome meal. Soon our delightful waitress, Abbie (from Rome), brought us small plates of the seafood paella, country paella, and rosemary shrimp in basil cream. As if we were still hungry, my husband just had to try the lamb lollipops. Giving into temptation was rewarded this one time. We lingered over a glass of Protocolo Blanco and considered what chocolate we would choose from the long list of sweets. The staff seemed to step to Spanish time as well; no rushing, just welcomed suggestions.

The setting is reminiscent of a small European fishing village, complete with children playing in the streets, bikers balancing glasses of wine while they navigate the cobblestones, and people strolling by with looks of envy as they spot our plates. Kevin tips his hat to Kim for the cool, clean décor which is both rustic and chic.

As the menu also reads: “**Chocolate**- A powerful elixir known to improve the mind, body and spirit”, we managed to make room for the delectable chocolate crème brulee, while our table neighbors raved over the white chocolate molten cake.

La Crema has it all... great atmosphere, delicious food with interesting and unusual ingredients, and a Spanish wine list to match. My taste buds were whirling with the unique blend of flavors and my mind was resting somewhere in a Barcelona café as my husband drove toward home on 30A.

La Crema is located at 38 Main Street, Rosemary Beach, Fl. 32461, Phone: (850) 624-4121, No reservations.

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Onano Neighborhood Café

BY NEVILLE CARSON

Dining outside at Onano Neighborhood Café is like spending a couple of hours in an idyllic European town. At least, that's how it seemed to my wife, Julie, and me when we recently visited. The town hall bell of Rosemary Beach chimed the hour and the air was filled with swifts darting and swooping after their evening meals. We sat at a table right on the curb, our attention divided by the passing stream of people and the setting sun casting a roseate glow over the ocean.

Onano is designed with charm in mind. Inside, the dining room's blonde wood finishes offer a cozy retreat from inclement weather. Outside, the edifice of the Pensione building in which Onano is housed, with its Old World architecture and awnings, adds to the feeling of being in some romantic clime.

Our meal began with the traditional offering of bread. Warm from the oven, our small, sliced focaccia was fluffy in texture with the pleasing aroma and flavor only extra-yeasty bread can have.

Following quickly on the heels of our bread were our wine selections. I decided on the Dreyer Cabernet 2009. This light-bodied cab was redolent of fruit with a hint of ginger that lingered on the tongue. Julie selected a Michael Pozzan Chardonnay. On tasting the well-chilled glass, I detected apples, pears, and a quality I can only describe as fresh country air.

We took a little time discussing our appetizers. The variety of tempting selections made it difficult to choose. At last, we each decided on a mushroom dish. Julie chose the wild mushroom soup—that day's soup du jour. It was a creamy puree with the agreeable earthy flavor of fresh mushrooms and a touch of salt. The dish was quite simple and all the better for it. I had the mushroom ravioli and was glad I did. The pasta shells were firm but tender and not too thick. Each ravioli was bursting with diced wild mushrooms. Strips of more mushrooms and a generous sprinkling of salty pecorino Romano cheese further enhanced the flavor, along with a sauce of brown butter and herbs.

The appetizers were the perfect size—just large enough to whet our appetites instead of taking the edge off our hunger. This was fortunate, because it left us plenty of room to enjoy our entrees: diver scallops for Julie and crab cappellini for me. The scallops were enormous, three in number, and served on a bed of saffron-clam risotto. As with the mushroom soup, the approach to the food was simple. The scallops were fresh, pan-seared, and left to speak for themselves, which they did with delicious authority.



Diver Scallops

My cappellini was a dish to remember. It was absolutely loaded with crabmeat and perky with flavors of garlic, chilies, and herbs. The addition of the chilies added the right amount of heat and complemented the crab well. Once again, the portions were satisfying, but not overwhelming.

We debated whether or not to have dessert—for about half a second. I opted for the tiramisu. Just writing about it makes me salivate a little. I can't recall when I've had a tiramisu this cool and creamy. Surmounted by chocolate-covered coffee beans and a mint-leaf garnish, the dessert was beautiful on the plate and its light hazelnut flavor was lovely on the palate as well. Julie had the chocolate tart, which was similar to a flourless chocolate cake. Dark, rich and accompanied by caramel gelato, its flavor left us wishing we could eat more.

I would be remiss not to mention that Onano Neighborhood Café's excellence is at its base due to the consistency of the people who own and run it. Mark and Penny Dragonette have been the restaurateurs here since 2003 and brought in Co-Owner/Chef Chris Joyner in 2006. Our server, Rachael, was the model of charm and efficiency, offering good advice about the menu and superb service throughout our meal.



Raspberry Almond Cream Tart



Onano Neighborhood Café is located at 78 Main and West Water Streets, not far from the town hall in downtown Rosemary Beach. The restaurant is open Monday—Saturday for dinner only, starting at 5 p.m. To find out more, call (850) 231-2436 or surf to www.onanocafe.com or www.sowal.com/restaurant/onano-neighborhood-cafe.

A Taste of Paradis

BY LAUREN GALL



Diver Scallops



Mark Eichin

Located in beautiful Rosemary Beach, FL is a little slice of heaven known as Restaurant Paradis, a small fine dining restaurant, with a comfortable and inviting full service lounge. Evoking a warm neighborhood feel, the upscale restaurant's dining area features understated wine country elegance with a unique charm. Owned and operated by Mike Pair, Restaurant Paradis is serving up a chic, yet inviting, atmosphere with exceptional cuisine to match.

Pair, who has been working in the restaurant business since he graduated from Georgia State, was corporate with several well known franchises, such as McDonalds, Arby's, and Chick-Fil-A over the course of several years. Fast forward to the early nineties and Pair, along with his wife, Gayle, opened their first restaurant on the North Shore of New Orleans, in Mandeville, Louisiana. The restaurant, named Zazou Cafe, had much success and over the next several years the family opened quite a few restaurants. Because of this culinary success, the family was approached with the opportunity to become part of the the Village of Baytowne Wharf in Sandestin. This was a brand new development at the time and Pair decided it was a great opportunity. The couple soon moved to Destin in 2002 and opened Bistro Bijoux in July of that year.

However, the growing popularity and beautiful architecture of Rosemary Beach always led the family to spending Sunday afternoons there, enjoying wine



and cheese and the gorgeous environment. Pair and his family were soon approached about a fantastic "spot for a restaurant" in The Mercado and, upon selling Bistro Bijoux, Restaurant Paradis in Rosemary Beach was born.

"Restaurant Paradis and Rosemary Beach are really a match made in heaven," says Ansley Pair, daughter of Mike and Gayle, as well as Wine Director and FOH Manager. "One of the things we love most about Rosemary is the sense of community. Paradis evokes that same kind of warm neighborhood feel, mixed with a little wine country elegance. Rosemary has really embraced Paradis and has been open to our style, innovation, and menu. Being able to walk through the streets of Rosemary and see five of your neighbors along the way is really something special.

Paradis is the same in that we always have at least a handful of regulars each night, chatting and having a glass of wine. You will always bump into a friend there."

Other than the extraordinary community feel and neighborhood friendly vibe, Restaurant Paradis offers the best in culinary creations, prepared passionately by Chef Mark Eichin. "Chef Eichin originally came on board with us at Bistro Bijoux and is the executive chef here at Paradis," says Pair. "He graduated from Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Institute in Orlando and is magnificent." When asked about the restaurant's most sought after dishes, there are three to note: the Diver Scallops appetizer, the Paradis Grouper and the Bayou La Batre stuffed shrimp. The restaurant is also committed to buying local ingredients, as well as organic when possible and believes it truly makes a difference in the food served.

With a focus on coastal cuisine, Restaurant Paradis draws from the rich flavors of the coastal area as well as other regions to create its innovative and tantalizing dishes. The beautiful Gulf waters supply an abundance of fresh seafood and wild caught shrimp to inspire Chefs Mark and Will. They also have a flair for using common ingredients, but with a unique twist. The restaurant is dedicated to sourcing locally grown products so the menu changes with the seasons, thus providing the dinner guest with new delectable dishes to look forward to year round.

And if that doesn't make this unique restaurant appealing to you, then their commitment to the environment might. With an eye to the preservation of our planet, Restaurant Paradis and staff craft their own Sparkling and Still waters. Filtered to 0.5 microns, the process allows trace minerals to remain, which in turn makes the water the best around. They serve the refreshing waters in the restaurant's signature blue, reusable glass bottles. By using these bottles as part of a recycling effort, the establishment is helping to prevent thousands of bottles a year from ending up in the community's landfills. In addition, all of the restaurant's carry-out containers are compostable. This unique mixture of community, environmental responsibility, elegance, and fantastic food truly make Restaurant Paradis stand out amongst other eating establishments.

To learn more about Restaurant Paradis, or make a reservation, visit www.restaurantparadis.com or call (850) 534-0400. Restaurant Paradis is open daily for dinner at 5 p.m.

Seagar's

BY MARY WELCH

I very well may have had the best dinner of my life – or certainly within recent memory. And I found this sublime meal in a Hilton Hotel just off of 30-A.

Yes, I know when you're living on the beach it sometimes may be difficult to put on a blazer and replace flip flops with real shoes, but the effort is well worth it.

Seagar's Prime Steaks and Seafood is Destin's only AAA 4-Diamond restaurant, and one of only two in Northwest Florida. Opened in 1998 and modeled after the best steakhouses across the country, Seagar's provides the type of dining experience and cuisine found in major metropolitan cities – but it's right in our own backyard.

Seagar's offers a variety of both surf and turf. Appetizers include Lobster Bisque (officially known as Lobster, Lobster, Lobster Bisque), Tuna Tartare, Emerald Coast Seafood Martini, (jumbo lump blue crabmeat and Gulf shrimp), Hudson Valley Foie Gras, and Osetra Caviar.

We opted for the Caesar Salad, which is prepared tableside by Sandy Clark with her secret recipe. Swiftly and expertly she mixed and whisked the ingredients until a tangy, perfectly blended salad was served. Slightly bitter, crunchy, salty, garlicky, smooth – all were sensations rushing through our mouth. To sum it up: utterly sublime.

There is a variety of seafood, including Chilean Sea Bass, live Maine Lobster, South African Cold Water lobster tails, blackened tuna, and a Dover sole, filleted tableside and served with a brown butter, capers, and lemon sauce.

But the steaks are melt-in-your-mouth perfection. Executive Chef Dan Vargo is firmly in control of his kitchen and he presents hand-selected, USDA prime steaks. All steak can be served with a variety of preparations such as Oscar, au poivre, Maytag/bacon, and Rossini.

Loving the drama of the tableside Caesar salad, we opted for Steak Diane, which frankly we had never had before and really didn't know what it was – except it was going to be prepared tableside by Patrick Crumpler. Turns out Steak Diane involves beef tenderloin medallions quickly sautéed and then set aside while a delicious sauce is concocted with cream, Worcestershire sauce, and

Scallops- Seared Scallops with House-made Gnocchi, Mushrooms, Asparagus and a pan sauce of Fish stock and Butter



Chef Dan Vargo



Bananas Foster- A tableside presentation of house-made Caramel and Flambé Bananas



Crusted Snapper- FL Red Snapper crusted with thinly sliced Tuscan Bread (to give the crispness of seared skin-on fish), Tomato and Vegetable Compote- Eggplant, Zucchini, Squash, Red and Yellow Pepper and Red Onions finished with fresh herbs and a Saffron Fish Sauce of Fish stock, Fennel, Onion, Mushroom and Pernod. Garnished with shaved Fennel

cognac. Yes, a true show stopping performance as the flames shot out of the pan while Patrick deftly handled the situation and then added the medallions back to fully integrate the sauce's flavor into the steaks.

Complementing our dinner were the most perfect mashed potatoes ever and thick, firm asparagus served with Hollandaise sauce. Frankly, we worried that the Steak Diane would be too complex for our 19-year-old companion who prefers his meat in big chunks served with A-1 sauce. But never fear, he surprised us with his appreciation of the fine flavors and used the mashed potatoes to lap up every bit of the sauce.

Well, we certainly couldn't break the tableside drama so we selected for dessert bananas foster that was again prepared by the culinary magician Patrick. When the

preparation table was wheeled up, there was a large brown mound about the diameter of softball. Turns out it was the brown sugar that was going to be the foundation of this wonderful dessert. Some liqueur here (rum, banana, and Grand Marnier), some flames there, and this sweet concoction was poured over vanilla ice cream. We couldn't finish it, which was the only regret of the evening.

We asked Patrick why the restaurant has so many dishes prepared tableside – not that we were complaining. “We're very proud of our menu, our cuisine, our wine list and our service,” he says. “But when we come to your table and prepare a meal, it's much more intimate than simply serving. We get to talk with our guests, answer their questions and participate in their evening. It takes their dining experience to the next level, which is what we want.”

No recap of an evening at Seagar's could be complete without mentioning the wine list. General Manager Kevin Moran's passion for fine wine is reflected in the wine list. Moran, one of only 3,600 Certified Specialists of Wine in the world, has selected more than 600 labels. Currently it features more than 3,700 wine bottles on site, with 5,000 bottles poured each year.

You would be hard-pressed to find a better restaurant or a more enjoyable experience on 30-A – or beyond – than at Seagar's Prime Steaks and Seafood.

Seagar's is located at 4000 Sandestin Boulevard, in the lower level lobby of the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Visit them at www.seagarsdestin.com or call (850) 622-1500.

Edward's

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The V Seagrove Fine Dining at the Beach

BY SAM MOORE

When The V Seagrove opened March 11, 2011 at the corner of County Roads 395S and 30A, the opening was a long-awaited and much-anticipated event for locals and visitors alike. The restaurant did not disappoint. The restaurant brought a much-needed fine-dining option to the Seagrove area for the busy vacation season, and its bar quickly became a

Hartley's desire is for his restaurant to be known for its "excellent fine dining without an attitude," which he feels its food and ambiance has accomplished. All are welcome, including families. But if it's an intimate, romantic dining experience you seek, you will find that at The V, with its white tablecloths and an attentive wait staff impressively dressed for the experience in black and white.

And when you awake the next morning with that unforgettable meal on your mind, make it a return engagement and try The V's Sunday brunch. Waffles, smoked crab cakes, omelets, truffled eggs, and southern eggs Benedict are among the mouth-watering items one will find.

Dining is available inside at one of the 140 seats with a view of Gulf across the street, or outside at one of its 70 seats. The full service 18-seat rounded bar offers the full menu as well, or a small-plate bar menu is available. Proving very popular has been the theater kitchen chef's bar where diners can watch the magic happen.

Sunday brunch is served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. each week. The V opens for dinner Tuesday through Sunday from 6 to 10 p.m. The restaurant is open year 'round except for the month of January when it will close. The restaurant is also available for private parties.

"We enjoyed a busy season and beyond," says Hartley happily. "We have been extremely well received; much better even than anticipated."

The V Seagrove is Phase I of what is to be the Hotel Viridian and Villas. The Villas will consist of two Gulf-front houses on the beach across from the hotel/restaurant and bar.



favorite hangout of the local community all year 'round. If the number of diners and visitors that the restaurant and bar have served continuously since opening can be viewed as a barometer of the restaurant's health, the restaurant is robustly healthy.

The restaurant specializes in offering the freshest local seafood, steaks and other cuts of beef, stone crabs, oysters, and the chef's favorite: crispy whole Gulf fish. Chef David Cunningham came to The V from Commander's Palace with a firm culinary background under his belt. Backing him up is General Manager Sean Goss, who is a highly qualified chef in his own right, and whose extensive resume includes stints at Seagar's, Rutherford's, and several Capitol Grills. George Hartley and Chip Haring are the restaurant's two managing partners. "Sean is not just the general manager, but also an accomplished chef with extensive wine knowledge and a partner," says Hartley.

The menu at V Seagrove changes daily, depending on what's fresh and in season. One constant, however, is the extensive selection and diversity of the menu.

Get started with some fresh Gulf shrimp, stone crab claws, oysters, the Southern favorite of shrimp and grits, calamari, scallops, mussels, an array of soups and salads, and shrimp and okra gumbo. Then progress to some succulent dishes with flair in the Swimmers category, such as blue crab stuffed Florida flounder, coastal curry pot, jumbo lump blue crab cakes, truffled lobster gnocchi, seafood jambalaya, yellowfin tuna, Wahoo, black grouper, and red snapper. In the Walkers category, find cinder-brined double-cut pork chop, brisket, short ribs, duck sliders, Angus chuck burger, veal meatloaf, filet mignon, rib eye, and New York strip. All can be served with a variety of grilled vegetables. Finish off with any number of scrumptious desserts.



For more information, call (850) 468-0973, or keep up with The V Seagrove on Facebook. In addition to brunch they are open for lunch 11-2 Wed-Saturday and Happy Hour Friday and Saturday 5-7.

A Table with a Vue

BY LAUREN GALL

Requesting a table for two with a view? Normally, a request like this could pose a problem for most restaurants. However, the greater challenge for Vue on 30a might be locating a seat in the house without a view of the emerald waters and sugar white sands of Northwest Florida.

The Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club has been a fixture for residents of the community along 30-A for well over forty years. In 2010, the club's fine dining venue, The Beach Club, underwent a dramatic renovation and reopened as Vue on 30a, a sought after dining experience not only for club members but local residents and area visitors alike. The great transformation took full advantage of the beautiful views of the Gulf, and provided a sleek, contemporary look with an elegant and inviting atmosphere. The restaurant can accommodate up to 200 diners in its 10,000 square feet and every, yes I said every, table at Vue has a view with the expansive floor-to-ceiling windows.

And if the view isn't enough, diners can order from an extremely diverse menu and extensive wine list sure to please the most distinguished palette. The quality fare, and the intricate care with which it is prepared, are of the highest priority at Vue on 30a. Giovanni Filippone, who became Vue's Executive Chef in 2011, brings to the table extensive training from the Culinary Institute of America and fifteen years of experience. In addition, Chef Filippone is known for his appearance on Season 5 of the hit series "Hell's Kitchen" with celebrity chef Gordon Ramsey.

Chef Filippone recently announced his new additions to the Fall/Winter menu, which brings some exciting offerings to the restaurant. The menu will undergo a seasonal change with the addition of a few of Chef's favorite entrees, including Osso Bucco with polenta and seasonal vegetables finished with its own natural sauce; and Lamb Shank with red wine risotto, seasonal vegetables, and a rosemary demi. A Specialty Cocktail Menu (in addition to the smaller plates offered on the bar menu) will include the Santa Rosa Beach Sunset Martini: Stoli Vodka, Peach Tree Schnapps, Fresh Squeezed OJ and a splash of Grenadine; Davey Jones's Punch Martini: Bacardi Light Rum, Myers Dark

Run, Cointreau, Peach Tree Schnapps, Pineapple, Fresh Squeezed OJ and a splash of Grenadine; and the Blue Eyed Goose Martini: Grey Goose Vodka served with Stilton Blue Cheese Stuffed Olives.

Filippone also works daily with staff and local growers to find the best and freshest products available in the area.

Another transformation for Vue on 30a is the fantastic bar and lounge area. This ideal environment caters to small gatherings or the individual seeking a spot to relax after a long day of work. The Vue's



Filet Mignon



Tuna Tartare



Deconstructed Caesar Salad



Chef Giovanni Filippone



Fruits de Mer



Pistachio Grouper

specialty cocktails and small plate bar menu offers such culinary creations as Grilled Da Venison Rolls (rolls stuffed with Venison banana peppers, wrapped in bacon and marinated in the Vue's own special sauce), just for starters!

The restaurant is proud to have established repeat business with local clientele as well as area visitors. It has an incredible relationship with the Club's membership; but with the unique menu and wine list, continues to attract locals, culinary experts, food editors, and area guests.

Vue on 30a offers lunch, dinner and a Sunday Champagne Brunch. It is a favorite location for destination weddings, hosting numerous beachfront events monthly. For more information about Vue on 30a, visit www.vueon30a.com or call (850) 267-2305

casual dining



Angelina's Pizzeria & Pasta: It's A Family Affair!

BY SUSAN BENTON

Growing up in New Jersey, Brian Ethridge was an inquisitive young man who lived near a pizzeria and decided he wanted to learn how to make fresh authentic hand-tossed pizza for his own consumption. As fate would have it, Ethridge moved to Palm Beach, Florida, where he met Jan from East Hampton Long Island, who was a recent graduate of Johnson & Wales at Providence.

In a little over a year, the two married settling in Jacksonville, Florida, and had a daughter. The Ethridges had been discussing raising their daughter in a smaller town, and the possibility of opening an Italian restaurant and putting their culinary skills to the test, when fate stepped in again. They came across an article about New Urbanism and the town of Seaside in Architectural Digest Magazine. The article sparked their interest so they came to South Walton for a visit, fell in love with Seagrove, and bought a lot for their Italian restaurant, making their dream a reality.

The Ethridges decided to call the eatery Angelina's after Jan's grandmother. They planned to use all of the family recipes that Jan had acquired over the years along with Brian's techniques making hand-tossed pizza. Jan's parents, now retired, decided to move as well so that the family could work in the restaurant and spend time together. Jan's father, a former dentist (now deceased), worked as a bartender a few days a week, filling Angelina's with laughter.

It's now nearly two decades later and on February 3, 2013 Angelina's will celebrate nineteen years in the restaurant business. Jan and Brian continue to burst with pride as the owners of a successful 30-A Italian eatery, and now as the parents of a talented college student. You can find the quaint little white house nestled in the heart of Seagrove, just ½ mile east of Seaside on County Road 30-A. Jan says, "We built Angelina's to fit in to what was here at the time and there were mostly cottages. We did not want anything pretentious, just an Italian family-owned joint." Seating is available in the front bar area or on the attached side sun porch.

Named one of 30-A's 2012 "Hot Spots for an Affordable Meal" and "Hot Spots for Italian Cuisine", Angelina's makes all of their sauces, pizza dough, meatballs, and salad dressings (like the gorgonzola) in-house and from scratch, using family recipes.

There is no time for slacking at Angelina's, where the ever popular and hearty Lasagna is made each day stacked high with meat and cheeses then baked. Fresh

Brian Ethridge says, "Hands down the Chicken Piccata is the best seller! It is a delicious dish that contains marinated chicken breast that is sautéed in olive oil; finished with butter, lemon, and capers; and served with fettucini in a tomato cream sauce." Other favorites on the menu include the Fettucini Alfredo with Gulf Shrimp nestled in a bed of creamy white sauce, and the variety of hand-tossed pizzas made to order. Brian says, "We have been hand-tossing



pizzas longer than anyone else in the area!"

Angelina's Pizzeria & Pasta serves up comfort-style food at a fair price, but that is not their only goal. Jan says, "I want people to know we are a family-run restaurant serving family meals, and I want people to feel that they are like family to us!"

basil is purchased to create the herbaceous blend of basil pesto also blended each day. City Grocery in Ft. Walton Beach supplies the restaurant's local produce.

Leslie Dubuisson has worked with the Ethridges for fifteen years, starting out as a prep cook. Within three years she was promoted to kitchen manager and chef, creating the freshest cuisine each morning and running the lines at lunch. When I met with her, she was making one of the most requested and delicious menu items, Angelina's Pepperoni Pizza.

Angelina's Pizzeria & Pasta will put together large orders to go. They are located ½ mile East of Seaside at 4005 East County Road 30-A, Seagrove Beach, Florida, 32459. They can be reached by phone at (850) 231-2500. Hours of operation are Sunday through Thursday 11am - 9:30pm, and Friday and Saturday 11am - 10pm.

Bud & Alley's Taco Bar

BY SUSAN BENTON

Nestled along the beautiful beaches of South Walton on 30-A lies the town of Seaside and some of the region's most delectable eateries. In the heart of them all is Bud & Alley's Taco Bar, owned by Dave Rauschkolb, a forward-thinking restaurateur.

After the long term success of his primary restaurant Bud & Alley's, and a strong desire for more casual dining options in Seaside, Rauschkolb set out to fulfill his passion for bringing authentic Mexican fare to 30-A as, he remembers, in 2007 "It was non-existent." He did not have to look far for a location. He found it literally at his back door as the space north of Bud & Alley's became available to lease, and as luck would have it, the space was attached to the primary restaurant's auxiliary kitchen.

Rauschkolb turned to friend and Seaside architect Leo Casas, a native of San Diego, for help with the restaurant design, and opinions on creating the most authentic Mexican taqueria menu. The pair planned a trip south of the border to the Casas family home in California, and made sure to stop at all of Casas family's favorite haunts, hang-outs, and dives. Together the dynamic duo researched and taste-tested the best tacos and Mexican fare at over thirty-five different taquerias, developing the layout and plan for Bud & Alley's Taco Bar.

The hard work paid off, and upon return, with a swift knock of a wall, proper permitting, and an incredible authentic menu in place, Rauschkolb says, "The spot worked. It took eight days to open, and it was success immediately!"

The design of Bud & Alley's Taco Bar is ultra-casual, colorful, and playful. The menu is true Mexican comfort food, with all items fresh, never frozen, and made in-house from scratch daily. Rauschkolb says, "The chips in many Mexican restaurants are not made fresh daily, and they are commercial grade chips from places like Cisco. We make everything fresh every day."

A few of Rauschkolb's favorite menu items include the Baja inspired fish tacos made with seasonal local fish, the house-made chorizo sausage tacos, the satisfyingly delicious breakfast burrito, and the tortilla soup, which he says, "Is simply awesome!" Patrons of Bud & Alley's Taco Bar are offered a complimentary salsa bar with the freshest of ingredients to customize their order, such as cilan-



Knock the sand off your feet and enjoy a Baja-style fish taco or home-made guacamole with an ice-cold cerveza either inside the cozy bar or at festive outdoor tables.



tro and wedges of lime. Rauschkolb says, "We actually have three types of salsa. The first salsa comes with our chips. The complimentary selections on the salsa bar are the tomatillo salsa and the Roja, or hot, selection. If you run out of salsa you can always get a free refill."

My daughter and

I enjoyed the satisfying quesadilla of the day, the local shrimp tacos, and the house-made guacamole on a recent dining experience. An enormous hit with many patrons is the thirst-quenching sangria, the signature margaritas, and the impressive line-up of over fifty tequila varieties to savor. A Kids Menu is available and all food items at Bud & Alley's Taco Bar cost fewer than ten dollars, which

is fantastic for those families that don't want to break the bank while on vacation, and for those that just want to kick off their sandy shoes and wash down a spicy taco with a cold cerveza.

Rauschkolb says, "This has been a long-time dream of mine, and it would not have happened without the help of a bunch of amazing friends, and of course the alignment of the planets."

Bud & Alley's Taco Bar is located directly north of Bud & Alley's restaurant at 2236 East County Road 30-A in Seaside, Florida. You can reach them by phone at (850)-231-4781, and by email at info@budandalleys.com. Hours of operation are Monday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Susan Benton is the owner of 30AEATS.com where she shares her passion for food and travel, and her commitment to promoting local farmers, chefs, artisans and restaurants along the Gulf Coast.



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Where Beach Meets West

Cowgirl Kitchen Market in Seagrove

BY LAUREN GALL

Nikki Nickerson knows a thing or two about real estate. After all, not only is she a restaurateur, but also an accomplished real estate professional throughout the Emerald Coast. So when the Seagrove Beach property, formerly occupied by the Wheelhouse Restaurant, opened up for new businesses, Nickerson seized the opportunity. As a real estate agent, Nickerson helped the owners purchase the commercial property for the new “Shops of Old Seagrove” that includes five cottages and the Wheelhouse on 1.2 acres. “It is a fantastic location, close to Seaside with great views and proximity to the beach. The Cowgirl Kitchen Market is one of the anchor merchants located in the cottage on the corner of 30-A and Gardenia,” says Nickerson. The property eventually became home to a 4,200 square foot restaurant named 723 Whiskey Bravo, which occupies the actual footprint of the former Wheelhouse restaurant.

Passionate about the region and a long-time enthusiast of real estate and good food, Nikki Nickerson first combined her two loves into the successful Cowgirl Kitchen located in Rosemary Beach. Nickerson, who was born in Galveston, Texas, was transplanted to Atlanta in the eighties with her family. Her love for the water, good food, and wine brought her here years ago and she got down to work. “My core business has been in real estate for the last ten years, but the restaurant business has a different energy and vibe to it,” says Nickerson. “The two businesses are a great complement and extension of what I love to do, which is bringing people together.”

Cowgirl Kitchen Rosemary Beach is a dining restaurant that has been open for eight years. In June 2011, Nickerson opened Cowgirl Market in Seagrove



Nikki Nickerson

Beach, a gourmet specialty market that features many of the Cowgirl signature breakfast and lunch items. The market quickly gained a loyal following for its own identity and unique menu items. Its popularity has sparked Nickerson to open a new retail shop, CK Feed & Supply, located just across the street from the

locations, our number one sandwich is the turkey BLT with Avocado on 7 -grain bread. It is just plain good!” The take-out favorite at both places is the Pulled Pork Enchiladas with Red Chili Sauce. “We have the same people over time that order it in large quantities to take it back to their beach house for family dinner. We make all of our pulled pork in house with a 24-hour saltwater brine and delicious house-made rub. Then it’s cooked slowly for 6 hours,” says Nickerson.



Texas Caviar

Rosemary Beach restaurant, in spring 2013. The link between all locations is the commitment to the idea of “beach meets west”, which means, Nickerson says, “it’s unpretentious and casual...just the thing after a day in the sun & sand.”

The Cowgirl Kitchen Market is a hotspot for locals, tourists, vacationers, and foodies alike craving such items as delicious breakfast tacos & biscuits, specialty sandwiches, salads, and soups; along with take-home casseroles and entrees packed with healthy, yummy ingredients. “We also offer a varied selection of gourmet and specialty foods from boutique purveyors around the country. Each product is personally vetted... we carry foods that we love and want to share with our friends and family,” says Nickerson. For breakfast at the market, the dish known as The Heartache is very popular. “It’s our homemade kickin’ pimento cheese and praline bacon on a southern biscuit,” says Nickerson. “For lunch, at both

Cowgirl Kitchen is the kind of place where the whole family can eat, three times a day if desired, without breaking the bank. An added element at both the Market and Feed & Supply is the selection of gourmet products and wines that foodies love. “We strive to carry products that are not available anywhere else in the area, so we are constantly on a journey of discovery in that regard... always looking for new products that taste amazing and are made from the best ingredients,” explains Nickerson.

For more information about Cowgirl Kitchen Market in Seagrove, visit www.cowgirlkitchen.com/market or call (850) 534-0770. The Market is located at 3005 E. Co. Hwy 30A, Santa Rosa Beach, FL and is open for breakfast from 7:30 am until 11 am and lunch from 11 am until close, daily. For more information about CK Feed & Supply in Rosemary Beach, visit www.facebook.com/feedandsupply. Feed & Supply is located at 31 Main Street, Rosemary Beach, FL and will also be open daily.



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Great Southern Cafe

BY DEBBIE MCCHESENEY

Once upon a time, we inhabited the tables and bar of a little restaurant called the Rose Café with the pink-lighted-rose sign hanging over the steps. Over time, the building became home to several different bars and restaurants; and now, the sign of the Great Southern Café adorns the portico of 83 Central Square. As a Seaside resident, I have watched, experienced, and tasted as our little local café has transformed into my favorite restaurant yet. Just wait until you try the grits.

Jim Shirley brought tangible beach energy to the location while creating a superb Southern menu. There is covered outdoor seating on a wooden porch next to a full bar, as well as indoor dining in a maze of small cozy rooms throughout the interior. My husband and I often forfeit our regular beach sunset in favor of our choice happy hour on 30-A: a \$5 dozen of oysters from 4-6 PM. We sit at the outside bar, chatting with fellow locals and vacationers and catching up with the bartenders while drinking our favorite beverages: a Bloody Mary for me, and a Heineken for George.

A self-proclaimed Bloody Mary connoisseur (a Maryland native who knows her seafood and coastal cocktails), I can say there is no better on 30-A. The homemade mix is topped with pickled garnishes that make for some fine salty snacking while sipping. If you're into sweet, my oldest daughter swears by the pina colodas as the "best she's ever had." The Bloody Marys are just one small but delicious example of the unique care given to each and every item on the menu, cocktails included.

When you mention Great Southern Café, it is hard to find someone who doesn't immediately rave about the Grits à Ya Ya. Yet, the soul rolls made of chicken and collared greens in a crisp wrap with peach chutney, horseradish cream, and Creole mustard, give the famous shrimp and grits a run for their money. The West Indies crab martini served up in a large martini glass is not to be believed. Lump crabmeat spills over the rim of the chilled glass and pairs nicely with the fried green tomatoes with remoulade sauce for a perfect light dinner. A special perk... from the outside seating you can hear the live music emanating from the Seaside amphitheater.

Balsamic Grilled Salmon Salad



Famous Homemade Bloody Mary



iced tea. And to make for an even merrier world, there are homemade desserts, including key lime pie and cheesecake.

As co-owner Jim Shirley says, "I brought my tastes for international cuisines home and began to mix local foods- fresh produce from local farms and fresh fish from the Gulf- and Southern cooking with flavors from around the world." As the son of a Navy pilot, Shirley traveled the world and brought back a little taste of everywhere to Seaside to create an out-of-this-world dining experience in a little beach town café.

By now, it may have occurred to you that I have done quite a bit of eating at the Great Southern Café; this is true. It is a must stop for any local or visitor to 30-A. Hurry up, grab a seat, feel the vibe of a great beach bar; taste the salty Apalachicola oysters, bite into the best burger in town, or savor

Great Southern is also perfectly located for breakfast before a morning of shopping the Seaside boutiques and art galleries. My recommendation for breakfast is start with a steaming hot cup of local coffee and an order of New Orleans beignets if you don't mind a little powdered sugar on the tip of your nose. The vanilla pancakes and the fried green tomato benedict also top my list of favorites. Just a short walk up from the beach and you can grab a fantastic burger for lunch. There's a plethora of sides available to you: everything from scallion mashed potatoes to fried okra, black-eyed peas to smoked Gouda cheese grits (not to pick favorites...).

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JC Seafood House: Like Dining With Old Friends

BY SUSAN BENTON



Fried asparagus appetizer



Shrimp and grouper topped with crabmeat



Pudding dessert

Just off 30-A, in a strip mall deep in Seagrove, you will find JC Seafood House and owners Junior and Hai Pho. JC Seafood House may be new to Seagrove, but the owners, also brothers, have been a big part of the local dining community for more than twenty-five years.

I sat down with Junior in the dining room of JC Seafood House, and he shared with me that Hai was his mentor, teaching him everything he knew about kitchen skills and how to cook.

Hai Pho immigrated to America from Vietnam in 1979 and trained as a chef in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, focusing on French cuisine. He honed his culinary skills at restaurants such as Mike Andersons, a favorite of mine while I was attending LSU.

In 1982, Hai sent for his brother Junior to join him. Junior escaped Vietnam, and awaited clearance in Thailand before coming to America that same year. Later in 1982 Hai moved to Destin, accepting the Executive Chef position at Beachside Café, and Junior followed in 1986.

Together the brothers made the move to the Ocean Club at Tops'l in 1989, where Hai became Executive Chef, but later turned the reins over to Junior so that he could open his own restaurant, Nena's, in 1994. Junior remained with the Ocean Club for twenty years until opening JC Seafood House; both brothers became popular with the local crowds for their Cajun and Creole cuisine. Hai was hired as Executive Chef of Old Florida Fish House in Seagrove when it opened in 2004, and most recently was involved with Harbor Docks in Destin.

In February 2012, this all changed when Hai and Junior decided to join forces to open a family business together; and JC Seafood House emerged.

The name of the restaurant was decided by using the initials of Junior's children, Jackie and Christie. Junior says, "This is the first time I've owned

my own restaurant!" The brothers hope that locals (like myself) will remember how delicious Nena's was, and spread the word to try JC Seafood House.

The restaurant, which once housed the former Yanni's and Gravel Road, has been renovated and restored with new kitchen equipment. The décor is warm with dark earth tones of burgundy, brown, and beige, and a large bar sits at the front of the restaurant where patrons can dine and watch the brothers at work creating dishes. The dining room has ample seating, as does the covered patio located at the front entrance, where meals can be enjoyed on a beautiful day.

The cuisine at JC Seafood House has heavy Louisiana influences, with fresh soups made daily, such as corn & crab bisque and gumbo. I sampled both, which were seasoned perfectly and quite delicious.

I also tasted the JC grouper, sautéed and topped with crabmeat, shrimp, and their house sauce, while my daughter dined on the grilled grouper sandwich that came with fries. Both were flavorful and satisfying. The brothers order fresh beef that they grind on-site for their burgers, and use boudin and andouille sausage from Louisiana in many of their preparations.

The menu is well rounded with appetizers, such as escargot and calamari; entrée selections such as steak, seafood, pasta, and salads; and a children's menu. Junior told me that the grouper Almandine is the most popular item, as is the fresh catch of the day. Take-out is also available.

Junior and Hai Pho have been dedicated to serving patrons along the Emerald Coast for countless years, and have contributed to the success of so many other restaurateurs. Dining with them is like dining with old friends.

JC Seafood House is located at 4935 East County Road 30-A. Lunch hours are 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and dinner is served from 5p.m. to 10 p.m. For more information call (850) 231-1647.



Hai Pho

Local Catch Has Southern Cuisine With A Coastal Twist

BY SUSAN BENTON

There is a new restaurant in town at a familiar location. Local Catch Bar & Grill has opened where the former Ballyhoo and Salty Dog once resided in Blue Mountain Beach.

The restaurant has undergone minor renovations and updating; providing an open concept for dining, with a see-thru bar and a comfortable atmosphere for patrons to linger. On the day that I was visiting, regulars were enjoying drinks and food while seated inside and outside on the patio.

Owners Chef Adam Yellin and Jimmy Hasser have given new life to the old rustic structure, striving to make a place for all, (but mainly locals) to feel welcome. Hasser says, "This is a local restaurant, with local employees, serving local seafood and produce, with local art on the walls, where local musicians play." Every Sunday Yellin and Hasser plan to have live music from 3-7 p.m., changing the bands each week to include those like Hotel Oscar, Cadillac Willy, and Heritage.

Hasser, Yellin, and their PR girl Friday, Whitney Rowan, met at Alabama while in college. After graduation, they went their separate ways, but fate brought them all back together, just in time for Yellin and Hasser to purchase Local Catch.

Most might remember Hasser from his work at The Fish House on 30-A. Along with being a co-owner of Local Catch, he runs the front of the house, purchasing, and managing the wine and beer list.

PR girl Friday Rowan handles public relations for Local Catch and owns RowCo, her public relations and marketing firm, which concentrates on restaurants.

Yellin graduated in restaurant management, but after a stint in San Diego managing World Famous, he caught the bug and was moved to become a chef. He then traveled to Austin, TX, where he graduated with honors from Le Cordon Bleu. Chef Yellin came back to Santa Rosa Beach to complete his externship at Restaurant Fire and The Fish House, finally accepting a position with Commander's Palace in New Orleans.

Yellin and Hasser continued to communicate, often discussing their dream of restaurant ownership. When the opportunity finally arose, they seized it.

Yellin says, "I make everything in house and from scratch." His sauces are so spectacular; customers are already asking him to bottle them for sale. The vinegar-based white sauce is always in demand.

The most popular items on the menu are the tacos. The Caribbean Shrimp Taco contains luscious grilled coconut rum marinated shrimp. It is served with cabbage, pineapple salsa, the coveted white sauce, and is wrapped in a flour tortilla. Chef Yellin prefers using flour tortillas,

newest po-boy on the menu is called The Debris, which is served open face and smothered with gravy.

On the afternoon that I stopped by, Yellin suggested that I try the crab cakes. I am usually leery as I do not like much filler; but his were plump, juicy, and packed full of lump crabmeat. The crab tumbled from inside the cake as I slid my fork through to take my first bite. Spicy and delectable, it was pure enjoyment.

The catch of the day landed in front of me with Chef Yellin saying, "You have to try this!" Without the need to twist my arm, I dove into the succulent Yellow Edge Grouper, pan seared to perfection, and topped with Yellin's made-from-scratch NOLA BBQ Sauce. Sides included creamy stone-ground cheese grits and crisp green beans with a hint of herbs from their on-site garden.



Chef Adam Yellin and Jimmy Hasser



Grilled grouper over salsa with homemade tortilla chips



Crab cakes



Grouper with grits

as he believes corn tortillas overpower the flavor of the food. The Fish Taco is served with fresh local grouper, and the Pork Taco with house-braised shredded pork.

My excitement peaked when I found Local Catch used Leidenheimer bread from New Orleans to make their po-boys. Living in NOLA for many years, I grew quite fond of this most favored baked good. Chef Yellin's

Local Catch has quickly become one of my favorite local establishments. They are located at 3711 West County Highway 30-A in Blue Mountain Beach. Hours of operation are Monday through Sunday 11 a.m. to 12 a.m., and they can be reached by phone at (850) 622-2202.

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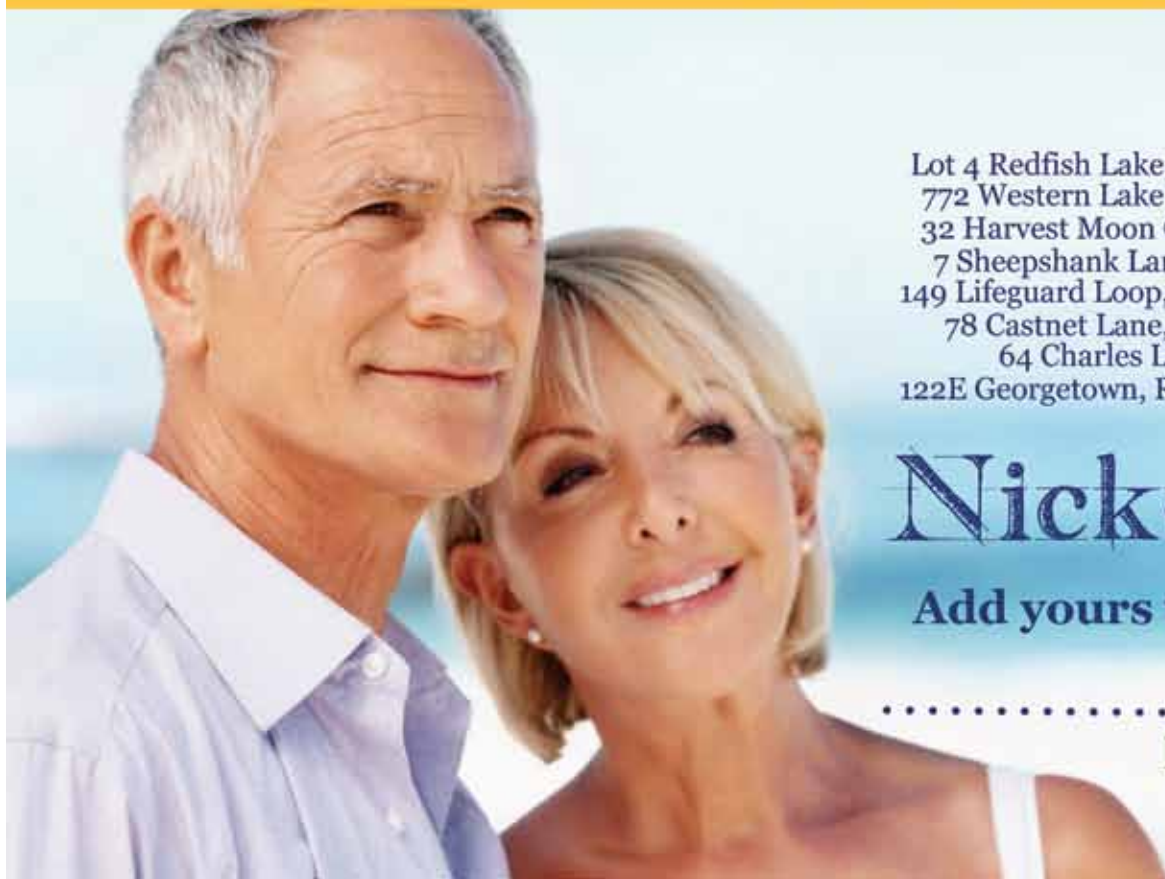
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Pickles Gets a Face Lift: Still Shakin After All These Years

BY SUSAN BENTON

In the heart of the picturesque town of Seaside, Florida, just steps from the beach where new urbanism was founded, you will find the vivacious couple Heavenly and Bill Dawson, who know a thing or two about good food. They are the local owners of several Seaside establishments, such as Dawson's Yogurt and Fudge Works, Heavenly's Shortcakes, Wild Bill's Beach Dogs, and The Shrimp Shack.

Among their array of eateries is also our family favorite, Pickles Burger and Shake, which is a classically designed space that sits in one of the first buildings built in Seaside. Over nineteen years ago, Bill approached Town founder Robert Davis about a concept of a hot dog and beer stand, and Pickles was created.

Though in 1993 it had only a closet sized forty-eight square feet of space, it has expanded over the years; and today Pickles boasts a new look, new menu, new sign, and close to six hundred spacious square feet. The eatery offers seating inside and outside on their dining deck that is surrounded by a vibrant living wall of ivy. Runners have been hired to deliver guests their orders tableside.

At Pickles it doesn't matter if you're wearing a wet bathing suit or a business suit; the walk-up window is where all place their orders before nestling into a favorite spot to wait on a sumptuous gourmet delivery. In the summer when the warmer weather hits, the Pickles Mister System activates and a gentle mist fills the dining area, cooling patrons and those meandering by.

All of the Dawsons' establishments strive to bring the freshest, highest quality, and local ingredients to their customers, and Pickles is no exception. Farmer Paul from the Seaside Farmers Market supplies all of their produce and the owners recently created what they feel is the best burger in the world. Heavenly says, "We are farm to table!"

Heavenly was set on serving the finest quality grass-fed burger and hand-cut fries. She was also on a mission to create the perfect milk shake. Together, the husband and wife team began their market research to find the best ingredients, which are essential to good food.



Old fashioned soda bins



Customers line up for ordering



Bill & Heavenly Dawson greet the girls at the front ordering window



Back patio seating area



For more than three years they searched until they found Will Harris of White Oak Pastures, a 146-year-old family farm located in Bluffton, Georgia, just a few hours from Seaside. White Oak Pastures is the largest USDA Certified Organic farm in Georgia and received the Governors Award for Environmental Stewardship in 2011.

Harris met with the Dawsons at his farm to teach them first-hand the special effort put into raising and processing his cattle. A later trip was made with the Pickles employees so they too could learn about the quality of the beef and chicken and the humane way they are raised and processed. Will and Heavenly perfected the special ground meat mixture for the eatery's beef patties, which she seasons at Pickles with a special seasoning, her own unique blend.

Heavenly then looked to her Atlanta roots to find the best burger buns and landed on Masada Bakery, a thirty-year-old artisanal bakery serving only certified organic whole grain breads. Masada now ships brioche buns to Pickles daily.

Last, Heavenly searched for the perfect mixture of butterfat for her ice cream used to make the rich, creamy milkshakes. She says, "We flavor all of the ice cream ourselves." The milkshakes are decadent and topped with rich whipped cream, special sauce, and a cherry. Guido Trevelini of G. S. Gelato developed the ice cream especially for them.

Other menu items at Pickles include their world-famous fried pickles, chili-cheese dogs, BLT, Club, and Philly Cheese Steak sandwiches, and the new Harris Ranch abattoir ground chicken burger. Heavenly says, "I like my chicken burger with Monterey Jack and pickled okra! You have to try it to understand the great taste of this unique chicken sandwich."

Breakfast items include Secret Recipe French toast, breakfast sandwiches, and the popular "Hangover Omelet", filled with sausage, bacon, fresh vegetables, cheese, and served with home fries. Mimosas and Bloody Marys are often ordered.

The Dawsons, their professional kitchen staff, and management team put an extensive amount of time, hard work, thought, and dedication into creating the best eatery menu and burger on the beach. Bill Dawson measures his success by the comments from customers: "The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive!"

Pickles Burger and Shake is located at 2236 Scenic Highway 30-A in Seaside, Florida. For more information call (850) 231-5686. Pickles is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Breakfast hours are from 9 to 11 a.m. weekdays and 8 to 11 a.m. on the weekends.

Pizza by the Sea

BY ANNE SCHULTZ

Who wants to cook dinner on a lovely summer evening when there are beaches to stroll, sunsets to gawk, and free concerts to attend up and down 30-A? On the other hand, who wants to spend a fortune at an expensive restaurant with children in tow? Pizza by the Sea covers all the bases. New owners Jason and Kristi Beer understand. They faced the same dilemma as tourists on summer vacations here with their two children before moving down from Indiana over a year ago. They purchased the same delightful restaurant they discovered as a solution to their vacation dilemma.

"The best compliment anyone pays me is when they don't realize there is a new owner as everything is the same," Jason Beer shares when my husband and I join his family for dinner at the restaurant. Their children--Alex age 10 and Caroline seven--stretch out their hands to shake ours when we are introduced and I think, what adorable polite children. Right away it feels like a family affair as we gather at teak-topped tables clustered on the outdoor patio, each shaded with a green and white striped umbrella. "We love to hang out with local families, like when they drop by after soccer practice. We provide hoola hoops and a play area so kids can play outdoors. Inside we keep a basket of toys and books," Kristi adds. No wonder they were voted best kid-friendly restaurant around.

Jason operated a pizza restaurant along with other businesses before moving here, so he knows a thing or two about good pizza and customer needs. "We bake ours on a hot stone to achieve a thin crispy crust and use the highest quality ingredients for our toppings," Jason explains.

"We use only organic chicken and we order fresh produce from a local provider," Kristi comments. "We try and make sure we think of everyone's needs, so no one is left out because of diet restrictions or food allergies. For people with wheat allergies we offer gluten-free pizza, and soy cheese for those with allergies related to dairy products. We have a customer who drives all the way from Sandestin with both allergies who loves our pizzas. We recently added Yum pizza bowls for folks counting calories and carbohydrates. They are big bowls of pizza goodies without the crust, and we love them ourselves," she adds.

My husband and I forsake our usual pepperoni standby and try two of the house favorites: the Kickin'



Jason and Kristi Beer pictured with their children



Alex and Caroline

Chicken and White Veggie. Toppings on the chicken include grilled chicken, feta cheese, bacon, and red onions with basil pesto. The veggie is loaded with spinach, tomatoes, mushrooms, feta cheese, and flavored with extra virgin olive oil. Yum is all we can say. We can't wait to come back and sample more like the new Chicken Bacon Ranch; a combo of grilled chicken, bacon, green peppers, red onions, and premium Ranch dressing; or choose from the delicious-sounding salad offerings, or Stromboli from the Sandwiches & Such selections. "People working in the shopping center, along with other locals, really love our affordable lunches starting at \$4.50," says Kristi. Yum is such a common customer response that the word is

printed in big letters on a jeep kept outdoors as an eye-catching ad.

The playful atmosphere continues inside where pizza plates decorated by children are displayed on walls, as well as whimsical quotes from customers like, "If I had to choose a last meal, this would be it." Lights are strung across the ceiling and tables are polka-dotted in bold turquoise circles. Friendly staff rushes around serving and taking orders. "I can't rave enough about my staff," says Jason. "They care about the quality as much as we do." The Beers hosted a benefit for the Seaside Repertory Theater as Colby, one of the staff, ran for prom king in a charity event for the theater. Turns out he won! "The community supports us and we support the community," Jason tells us.

So take that beach walk and enjoy the reasons you came here, then join the crowds who are doing the same at Pizza by the Sea.

Pizza by the Sea is located beside Publix Grocery Store on Hwy 395 in WaterColor, Florida. They are open for lunch and dinner daily from 11:00 a.m. Call (850)-231-3030, or visit www.pizzabythesea.com, on Facebook and Twitter.

The Shrimp Shack: A Steaming Success

BY SUSAN BENTON

What could be a better way to say I love you than to open a soulful seafood eatery as a couple on Valentine's Day? Heavenly and Bill Dawson did just that to rave reviews on February 14, 2009 and by July 2011 were named one of America's Best Seafood Shacks by Travel + Leisure Magazine.

The quaint yet humble eatery sits atop one of the most magnificent spots in Seaside, Florida, nestled among the sea oats and rolling Gulf dunes. A rear

They sourced their bread from Masada Bakery; a thirty-year-old artisanal bakery serving only certified organic whole grain breads, which also supplies the buns daily for their sibling restaurants, Pickles Burgers & Shakes and Wild Bill's Beach Dogs; and called on Paul Johnson, the main purveyor for their restaurant's fresh local produce.

The Shrimp Shack's plump juicy oysters are brought in from Apalachicola, and are served ice-cold and raw, steamed, or baked. A couple of menu favorites include The Shack Style, baked with onions and Colby jack cheese, while the Rutherford's (Bill's middle name) are baked with spinach, onion,

Speaking of lobster, The Shrimp Shack offers one of the best warm water lobster rolls that I have ever had the pleasure of eating. Moist and succulent chunks of perfectly prepared lobster cuddle together in a fresh baked bun, served ready for enjoyment.

Gumbo at The Shrimp Shack is not to be missed. It is made fresh daily, simmering onsite for hours prior to serving. It is the perfect go-to comfort food for those chilly beach days.

If you want to spice things up a bit you can always add another shake or two of the Shack Seasoning, which Heavenly concocted herself with R.L. Schreiber, creating her own unique blend.

Salads at The Shrimp Shack are bountiful and fresh, with all dressings made from scratch in-house using family recipes. Heavenly's Tampa roots and the Greek community that influenced her inspired the Tarpon Springs Greek Salad. Filled with beets, scallions, Kalamata olives, and potato salad, to name a few of its components, is a showstopper. The traditional Wedge is also a favorite, served with cold iceberg lettuce and chunks of blue cheese.

For those that may not be seafood lovers, The Shrimp Shack offers options such as the hearty Cuban Sandwich, in which freshly prepared thinly sliced meats, cheese, and pickles are layered, then hot-pressed and served to perfection.

Boutique wines are offered by the bottle or glass, and a vast selection of American and International beers are available, along with Stewart's soft drinks.

For the culinary finale, order a slice of the famed Key Lime Pie. Heavenly says, "We have had Key

Lime aficionados try our pie, and they say it is not too sweet or tart, it is just right!"

The Shrimp Shack is located at 2236 East County Road 30-A, Seaside, Florida 32459. Hours are from 10 a.m. – until daily based on the season. They can be reached by phone at (850)-231-3799, or visit their website www.sweetwilliamslltd.com.



screened door leads to a dining porch reminiscent of an old Florida Cracker house, evoking times past and reminding me of the home in which my mother grew up.

After ordering at the counter, more options for seating include the beachside deck under the magnolias, and the stunning elevated pavilion overlooking the white sand beaches and emerald green waters for which the Beaches of South Walton are so well known. It is the perfect place to enjoy a sunset meal while taking in breathtaking Gulf views.

Inspired by a trip to Apalachicola, Heavenly and Bill decided Seaside needed a seafood shack and they set out to create a classic menu with an unexpected twist; something the pair are experts at as the owners of four other popular Seaside eateries.

garlic and feta cheese. The Shrimp Shack has a dedicated oyster shucker who has shucked over 20,000 dozen bivalves since opening three and a half years ago, once again proving their popularity.

The best selling menu item remains the peel-and-eat steamed Royal Reds; shrimp that live in deep water over 100 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico, which are served with warm drawn butter, fingerling potatoes, and corn on the cob. The succulent crustaceans have a sweet taste similar to that of lobster.



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Summer Kitchen Café

BY SAM MOORE

An institution at Rosemary Beach since April 1999, the Summer Kitchen is a favorite casual dining spot for locals year around and for visitors who return year after year. All know the Summer Kitchen as a great place in town to take the whole family for casual dining in a friendly, welcoming atmosphere with affordable prices, and as an excellent place to pop in for a quick bite for one or two.

Dining is available inside the whimsically decorated diner, which can seat up to 30; or outside, where the sights and sounds of the comings and goings in the active town can be enjoyed, along with some fine breezes coming in off the Gulf. More than ambiance, though, the Summer Kitchen offers dining options all can and do enjoy again and again.

Summer Kitchen is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Breakfast and lunch are served seven days a week from 7:30 to 10:30 am. For breakfast, diners can find staples such as sausage and egg roll up sandwiches and omelets, using only Eggland's Best eggs. Also, check out scrumptious daily specials such as a "Wild Roll Up" of whole hog, salsa, and Thai sauce served with home fries. And on another day, satisfy the child in all of us with a delectable Chocolate and Coconut French Toast stuffed with dark chocolate, coconut, and cream cheese.

Then return for lunch to find more specials on the menu, such as a cup of soup; a Baja chicken wrap; turkey and white bean chili; or the popular Fire House Burger of Kobe beef topped with pepper jack cheese, jalapeno, lettuce, red onion, and mayo. Or try one of the restaurant's great salads, or a grilled cheese. Who doesn't love that?

Come back for dinner and enjoy in-season fish selections paired with a choice of beer, wine, soda, or iced tea. Dinner, served from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday, is full service.

James Dillon opened the Summer Kitchen in April 1999. Originally from the Boston area, Dillon has lived in South Walton for 15 years and worked as a chef at various area restaurants before opening the Summer Kitchen. "I always wanted to open my own place and I fell in love with the town of Rosemary Beach and could see it was going to be every bit as exciting as Seaside," he says. "I was excited to get in on the ground floor here and be a part of the town's growth."

The restaurant was the first restaurant and commercial business in Rosemary Beach. Its humble beginnings took place in a little red shack of just a walkup window from which the initial few people working, living, and building

in Rosemary were served. Historically speaking, a summer kitchen was an outbuilding where all the cooking was done in an effort to keep the heat out of the main house. Dillon felt it appropriate to name his restaurant at the beach the Summer



Butternut Squash Ravioli



Black Bean and Turkey Chili



Rock Lobster Appetizer




Local family dining out for dinner

Kitchen Café and invited the owners, visitors, and workers at Rosemary Beach and the surrounding communities to dine with him and keep the heat out of their kitchen.

It is now a place where neighbors meet neighbors in the bustling town. "It's a place you walk up and order, wander in and out quickly, and get back to the beach," says Dillon. The concept of simple, welcoming atmosphere and good food at a decent price has worked so well that

Dillon is now entertaining thoughts of opening franchises in other places.

For more information, check out the restaurant's website at www.theskcafe.com or call (850) 231-6264. Summer Kitchen prides itself on having sustainable practices and serving only organic produce and meat where ever possible on the menu.



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723 Whiskey Bravo: A Great Neighborhood Gathering Place

BY SUSAN BENTON

The story of Seagrove's 723 Whiskey Bravo is one of people coming together, beginning with the name itself. Owners Skip and Victoria Moore started off the second half of their lives with a bang by purchasing an airplane five years ago, though neither one had a pilot's license. They logged the necessary hours needed to fly their Cirrus SR22, obtained the license, and decided on a name using the aviation alphabet, settling on Whiskey Bravo. Since Skip and Victoria were married on July 23rd, they thought 723 would be appropriate, and 723 Whiskey Bravo was born.

After many wonderful culinary adventures where they scribbled notes on napkins and torn paper, they dreamed up ideas for a restaurant they envisioned opening: 723 Whiskey Bravo, a gathering place for family and friends.

In 2009 723 Whiskey Bravo became a reality, as Skip and Victoria sold their successful businesses in Atlanta and set out to be part of life on 30-A. They purchased and transformed what was once the dilapidated Wheelhouse Restaurant and existing cottages, and created the 723 Whiskey Bravo campus.

The Moores are proud that a variety of locally owned shops came together to fill the spaces surrounding the restaurant, and now locals and tourists alike can frequent Cowgirl Kitchen Market, Coast, Big Mama's Hula Girl Gallery, and Lost in Paradise Gift Gallery. Patrons of the restaurant that might be waiting on a meal also have a place to browse, and with a keen eye might even spot flooring and features that were once part of the original cottages.

Many of the recipes showcased at 723 Whiskey Bravo are from the Moores' own collection, and over time became family favorites they enjoyed with their children. Chef Will Mayes prepares these creations, such as Skip's delectable bone-in pork chop served with horseradish mashed potatoes, avocado coleslaw, and peach chutney.

Another popular menu item is one that Victoria often made at home bearing her name, The Victoria Salad, which is packed with chopped greens, sliced pears, strawberries, cranberries, sliced almonds, feta, champagne vinaigrette, and topped with a classic burger.

The décor of 723 Whiskey Bravo's is modern yet comforting as leather columns are used as buffers to reduce noise, and to separate the spaces. The meticulously carved interior bar resembles that of a Chris-Craft boat

and was constructed with the highest quality woods from local E.F. San Juan.

Since opening their doors, 723 Whiskey Bravo has steadily grown its team of faithful fans who stop by to watch their favorite sports on one of the many flat screen televisions inside the bar, and on the rooftop deck. The restaurant has attracted celebrity sports clientele as well, and this year fed greats like football legend Archie Manning, Saints General Manager Mickey Loomis, and

Whiskey Bravo is a place where one can discover a new menu favorite or delight in classic comfort fare while dining in the company of friends. A plaque on the front steps pays homage to "great neighborhood gathering places everywhere". With live music, trivia nights, wedding receptions and family-focused events to support local schools and non-profits, 723 Whiskey Bravo has taken root in the community, and so have the Moores.



The Victoria Salad, topped with a burger, is one owner Victoria Moore always made at home.



The bonfire pits located upstairs and downstairs are big hits for dining, sipping or kicking your feet up.



A signed jersey from Sam Bradford of the St. Louis Rams accompanies other sports memorabilia on the walls of 723 Whiskey Bravo.



Patrons gather on The Roof for sunset, cocktails and Gulf views.

World Series Manager Jack McKeon. Offering game day specials, sports patrons delight in favorites like the generously portioned Seafood Nachos, Fried Mac & Cheese sticks, and the crispy Pilot Wings.

The space that has everyone talking is the gorgeous yet cozy rooftop bar with panoramic views of the Gulf of Mexico and a nightly show-stopping sunset that was recently named the "Best Outdoor Bar" by Destin Magazine. Friends, families and co-workers come together on the roof to enjoy the open-air space offering fire pits, comfortable seating, and Happy Hour specials with delicious drinks and delectable fare.

723 Whiskey Bravo is located at 3031 Scenic Hwy 30A in Seagrove Beach, Florida, 32459. Parking can be accessed from Gardenia Street, but patrons are encouraged to walk and bike over. Check 723whiskeybravo.com for seasonal lunch and dinner hours. For more information call (850) 213-0015 or contact them at info@whiskeybravo.com.

At the time of publication, it was announced that veteran restaurateur George Barnes, formerly of the famous Smiling Fish Cafe, has decided to collaborate with the Moores as their Director of Operations.



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Wild Olives

BY NEVILE CARSON

In its logo, Wild Olives calls itself a “Market-Deli-Bakery,” and does a fine job of all three. You can purchase a terrific bottle of wine there, or load up on fresh-baked sweets like coconut cake and key lime pie. If you’re in need of staples or picnic fare, there are gourmet cheeses, Italian dried meats, and fruit spreads, along with coffee, bread, milk, and the like. But what stands out to me is the superb full-service dining experience. In terms of ambiance, service, and food, Wild Olives gets “A” grades all across the board.

If the weather’s fine, you can enjoy their comfortable outside dining area. It’s more or less L-shaped, so one side commands a view of Barrett Square and the other side looks out across the village green to Highway 30A and its beautiful, manicured landscapes. The site is ideal for people watching. Should inside eating be your preference, you’ll find Wild Olive’s wood-accented dining room extremely comfortable.

My wife, Julie, son Nicholas, and I were lucky enough to be at Wild Olives for dinner on a pretty evening, so we decided to sit outside. Our perky server, Mina, was soon providing us with wine from the restaurant’s ample list. I had the Martin Codax Tempranillo Roja Ergo, a Spanish vintage that tasted of cherries and pomegranates. Julie, ever the white wine lover, enjoyed a glass of Villa San-Julittette Sauvignon Blanc, a fragrant wine with flavors of gooseberry and tangerine. Nick decided against having wine (since he’s 10), opting instead for a frosty Hank’s Gourmet Root Beer.

Once our drinks were all taken care of, we ordered dinner. The menu offers a variety of gourmet flatbreads and Julie chose one of those: the smoked salmon and goat cheese. Nick decided to have the peel ‘em and eat ‘em shrimp from the “Small and Big Bites” section of the menu. For me, nothing would do except the espresso beef with caramelized onions and mushrooms.

Julie’s flatbread had a crispy, thin crust, much like a pizza’s. Slices of smoked salmon imported from Scotland and chunks of goat cheese were arranged attractively together. Their flavors joined well, too. Something about the smoky flavor of the fish and the mild, yet distinct flavor of the goat cheese sets your palate buzzing. Add to these flavors the salty surprise of capers and you have a terrific meal.



Nick’s peel and eat shrimp were big fellows and fresh as could be. On the side was a delicious broccoli slaw. But the standout on Nick’s plate was the cocktail sauce. Its flavor had a little extra kick to it. Julie and I both tasted it and, try as we might, we couldn’t figure out what ingredient accounted for the sauce’s unique flavor. It turned out to be nutmeg! I think we guessed everything else.

My espresso beef was just wonderful. Roasted with a dark espresso rub on the outside, the beef was served sliced. It was tender and the combination of the rub’s spices with the onions and mushrooms in the dish made me wish I could eat the meal twice. The sides for this dish

were memorable, too. The potato truffled croquettes, which are whipped potatoes deep fried in panko breadcrumbs, had a slight garlic touch and were crunchy on the outside and fluffy on the inside. There was also a mound of couscous on the side, perfectly cooked with a light onion flavor.

Wild Olives is owned and operated by Chris and Ivy Trovas. They have been running Wild Olives, which they built out from the studs, for six years. Recently, Chris travelled to Napa and was inspired by what he learned. Upon return, he revamped

the menu, incorporating as many organic vegetables as possible and meats from the finest suppliers in the region. The food shows the superb results. You get inspired, too, if you dine at Wild Olives—you’ll be inspired to return!

Wild Olives is at 104 North Barrett Square in Rosemary Beach. The restaurant is open Tuesday-Sunday 10am – 9pm and closed Mondays. For more information, call (850) 231-0065 or surf to www.wildolivesmarket.com.

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Castaways Sports Grille and Pizzeria at Carillon Beach- A Place You Will Want To Be Stranded

BY SUSAN BENTON

Tucked away off Highway 98 in between Rosemary Beach and Panama City Beach is the fun and inviting restaurant Castaways Sports Grille and Pizzeria at Carillon Beach. Castaways is nestled on Lake Carillon within the picturesque community, an ideal location for patrons wanting a casual atmosphere to dine as they come in off the beach, or for those wishing to fill their appetites while sitting on the patio or pier-side, the perfect spots to celebrate a sunset. According to Taylor Simmons, co-owner of Castaways, "People love the patio and pier. We have great views and do about thirty to forty private parties here during the year."

Castaways Sports Grille, a name chosen from the Tom Hanks movie of the same name, has been open now for more than two years. The restaurant has garnered a loyal following of locals and tourists alike who seek good food and entertainment. The bar area is home to more than fifteen flat screen TVs, and is an excellent location for sports fans of all ages to kick back and cheer on their favorite team while enjoying chicken wings or a great burger. Two televisions and 50 seats were recently added outside, just in time for football season.

Partner Greg Galla is from Buffalo, New York and his family has owned and operated two pizza restaurants in the Atlanta area for years. Galla Pizza is known for their authentic New York style pizza, and is popular among the Atlanta crowd for their festive bingo and trivia nights. Galla knew Simmons from Atlanta and the two discussed Galla's dream of opening his own pizza restaurant. Simmons also had the same passion but wanted to expand beyond pizza, opening a casual and entertaining establishment. With the Simmons family owning property in Carillon Beach, and knowing that Simmons's father Reid had opened Carillon Beach Rentals, the official rental company for Carillon Beach,

the young men both thought Carillon was a natural fit. Simmons says, "The perfect opportunity and space came available, so we took it!" Galla developed the pizza menu and drew inspiration from his rich family heritage, adding his own unique style to the pies. Matt Markowski and Randy Davidson were hired to manage the kitchen,

and bike or walk to get where they needed to be. Simmons stresses that though Carillon is gated, the Village and shops are not. "We are wide open to the public," he says.

Everything a family would need or want is at their fingertips, including swimming pools, a tennis court, and a beach club. With Castaways being set away from the community's private homes, the restaurant is able to stay open late into the evening seven days a week. Simmons says, "Our hours begin at 11am and we close when the people leave. Sometimes it is 10pm, mostly 11pm, but we have been known to stay open much later." Castaways Sports Grille and Pizzeria has become known for their vibrant nightlife and energetic crowds, and they offer live music, trivia night, and karaoke night throughout the week. When I ask Simmons how father Reid is involved in the business, he chuckles and says, "Dad is our trivia host!"

Families tend to dine earlier in the evening with Castaways offering a children's menu. As the evening advances, diners tend to shift to couples on dates, sports enthusiasts, singles, and those ready for some late night fun.

Castaways is a special place for all ages and families. There is a little something for everyone, but Simmons and Galla hope it brings happy memories for all.

Castaways Sports Grille and Pizzeria is located at 102 Carillon Market Street in Carillon Beach. Call (850) 230-2990 for more information, or visit www.castawaysspc.com. Hours of operation are 11am -till...



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One of our sunsets



Bomb Pop shooter and The Punch



Crab Cakes

and with Simmons developed the rest of the menu.

Some of the more popular pizza choices include the Basil & Tomato Pizza topped with fresh basil and tomatoes with Feta cheeses, and The Works, which is topped with peppers, onions, green and black olives, Italian meats, and Asiago cheese. Simmons says, "I added a new wrap and sandwich menu that has been very popular, but pizza is still the customer favorite first and foremost. The fresh grouper, lemon-pepper wings, and burgers are a close second."

Carillon Beach was designed by New Orleans architect Lloyd Vogt to be a new-urbanism community similar to Seaside, in which people would park their cars

CRUSH Wine Bar & Cafe

BY LAUREN GALL

In April 2010, I traveled the 17 miles from my house to Seaside to visit a relatively new wine bar named CRUSH. Needless to say, I fell in love then and I still have a crush well over a year later. In fact, the cleverly named restaurant and wine bar has made such an impression with me and the community that it has become a popular gathering spot for locals and friends having a few drinks after work, or even families enjoying dinner, all thanks to the experience of Jim Altamura and Harbor Restaurant Group.

Whether a resident or visitor, you may already be familiar with other of the Group's popular and well-established ventures in the area, such as Marina Café. With nearly 37 years in the business and a personal passion for wine, Altamura researches and personally selects all of the wine that is served at CRUSH and all of the group's restaurants. He says most of the select wines that are offered at CRUSH are completely different from those offered at the others. "I have found that what is frequently served at my other restaurants is a little different from what is requested at CRUSH, due to area and patron preference. However, at CRUSH, we offer a list of one hundred wines and twenty- four of those are offered by the glass," says Altamura.

If you think the wine selection is unique, then you are catching on to a calculated trend for the wine bar and café. When asked about the small plate concept at CRUSH, Altamura chuckles and responds, "Well, first of all, the kitchen is a little small. But, most of all, the idea originates from my travels in Spain and the tapas concept. There are already great full service restaurants in Seaside. So we wanted to offer something a little different at CRUSH... more of a blend of appetizer, tapa, bistro, and pacific-rim style food, all in one." CRUSH brings something different to the Seaside square, offering creative cuisine, including those clever

small plates; all complemented by an extensive California and international wine selection, as well as microbrews.

If neither the wine selection nor the unique style of cuisine have peaked your interest, here are a few more reasons to visit the wine bar. CRUSH also extends a



Photo by Mia McCorkle

casual yet beach chic setting to enjoy that exquisite glass of wine or plate of creative sushi. They are very pet-friendly, so you can bring your furry companions if you need a quick lunch bite between beach times or if you want to relax and unwind without thinking of any family members left behind. The outdoor terrace is a great place to sip, sun, gather, and dine, all while enjoying the fresh ocean breeze. Try the braised beef short rib quesadillas in red wine, lump crab cakes with Asian slaw, and goat cheese stuffed piquillo pepper with arugula and black olive vinaigrette. Your server will help you perfectly pair any dish with a wine that will leave you thirsting for more. The covered outdoor sidewalk dining reminiscent of a European café also afforded CRUSH Wine Bar & Cafe to be selected as the "Best Outdoor dining" venue by VisitSouth.com. With complimentary wine tastings, and daily happy hour specials, CRUSH is the place to see and be seen on 30-A.

So, if you're looking for a new crush, make your way to the beautiful town on 30-A known as Seaside. Go to 25 Central Square, where CRUSH Wine Bar and Café is located, and request an outdoor table. Order a glass of wine, and sample the sushi or order the spinach salad with marinated asparagus, roasted peppers, red onion, balsamic vinaigrette, and crumbled goat cheese, (my personal favorite). Enjoy the friendly service and tasty cuisine, all while the ocean breeze blows through your hair.

Just as you must crush the grape to make the wine, you must visit CRUSH to truly appreciate and make your Seaside experience complete.

For more information about CRUSH, call (850) 468-0730, or visit www.crush30a.com. Don't miss the daily Happy Hour half-price wine, beer, and sushi from 4-6pm.

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Louis Louis

BY LAUREN GALL

I can honestly say that it might be the best Key Lime Pie that we have ever tasted. Overall, the dinner was honestly delightful. We left smiling and stuffed.)



Crab Cakes

On the corner of Highway 98 and Mussett Bayou Road, in Santa Rosa Beach, there is a magical spot marked with fleur de lis and a bright gold and red sign that reads “Louis Louis.” The restaurant, named after the father-son duo that own and manage the restaurant, is a fun mix of eclectic atmosphere, really good food, and great service. (However, you probably already expected this if you knew the owners’ other hot spot in Grayton Beach, Pico’s Restaurant, and The Red Bar.)



Father and son Louis Petit and Louis Petit

I went in for my culinary adventure around 5:30 pm (the restaurant opens at 5 pm) on a Tuesday night, and was pleasantly surprised to be seated almost immediately.

After all, it is summer in Walton County and our restaurants are always busy here during this time. My husband and I were extremely excited to dine here, as we are already huge Red Bar fans. The expectations were set high...and, not unexpectedly, Louis Louis delivered!

The very first thing we noted, after being seated, was that the restaurant just emits a vibe of coolness. We ordered our beverages and began talking about what each of us would order for our meal. While I have to admit that the menu is not very large, don’t let that fool you. Each of the selections packs a powerful punch, and there really is something for everyone (even the kids).

When asked about the most requested item on the menu, Philippe Petit (Louis’s other son who also works

at the restaurant, making it truly a family affair) quickly answers, “The fresh fishes, sautéed and grilled, are popular, but of course, the crab cakes!” So for me that evening it was the crab cakes. For my husband, it was a cup of gumbo to start and the also frequently requested Panne Chicken for his entrée.

When my husband’s gumbo starter arrived, I could not help but ask to taste it. The gumbo was a scrumptious mix of seafood heaven and my husband had to fight me to get the spoon back. Soon after the entrees arrived. My crab cakes, served with an amazing beurre blanc sauce, sent my taste buds spinning with delight. My husband dove right into his Panne chicken, while also raving about the dressing, yes the house dressing, on his salad.



After eating until our hearts, and stomachs, were content, we both requested to-go boxes, but couldn’t resist at least ordering a dessert for us to “try” and “share”. We settled on the Key Lime Pie, a staple here in the state of Florida, and...wow! I can honestly say that it might be the best Key Lime Pie that we have ever tasted.

Overall, the dinner was honestly delightful. We left smiling and stuffed.

So, you might ask, “What could be better than an awesome atmosphere, excellent service, and a dream culinary experience?” If you arrive between 5 pm and 7 pm, it’s happy hour!

For more information about Louis Louis, call (850) 267-1500 or visit www.louislouis.net. The restaurant is open daily from 5 – 10 p.m. and accepts cash or check only. There is an ATM on site.

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Old Florida Fish House

BY ANNE SCHULTZ

The tin-roofed walkway to the Old Florida Fish House feels like it's leading to something surprising or unexpected. Turns out it takes us back to a time when natives knew this bustling region as endless forest and unbroken waterways. Days when even locals didn't realize the world rarity of South Walton's coastal dune lakes, one of which the restaurant borders. Windows frame views reminiscent of these frontier days as dusk transforms Eastern Lake into a silver mirror reflecting dark pines and golden marsh grasses.

Owner Cary Shahid is one of the pioneers whose father built some of the first hotels in Destin. He shows my husband and I a photo of the Shoreline Hotel that barely makes a ripple in the sea of coastal scrub forest surrounding it. The old Florida theme plays out on walls decorated in nautical maps, old boats, and 1950's family photos. Fishing scenes capture men on a charter boat proudly displaying trophy catches. Another photo shows a small boy grinning as he struggles to hold up a fish bigger than he is.

"Not many restaurants are in a setting like this and it will always stay this way as it's protected as state forest," Shahid proudly exclaims. "In fact, two bears hang out at our dumpsters. I surprised them once, and the larger of the two—a 300-pounder—shimmied up a pine tree faster than I can run," he laughs.

Owner of the acclaimed Ocean Club for 24 years, Shahid is an authority at providing top-notch quality food. While the setting is Old Florida, the menu is up-to-date, mixing southern classics with Asian, French, and Italian influences. Appetizers are an example where Gulf coast traditions like fried green tomatoes with lump crabmeat coexist with fried calamari accompanied by spicy marinara. My husband and I sample the Sushi menu featuring gems like Crunchy Shrimp Roll and the TNT Roll of tuna, fried tempura, green onions, and spicy sauce inside.

We can't resist seafood hauled in fresh from the Gulf, so we order two favorites. One is the Grouper Fish House, where grouper is sautéed with lump crabmeat and shrimp, accompanied by a beurre blanc sauce that adds a sweet richness without overpowering the fresh fish flavor. Curtis, our friendly server tells us the Sautéed Shrimp served with cheese grits is spiced with tropical jerk seasoning to give it a zesty kick. The extensive menu includes Seafood Old Florida Style, listing grouper, shrimp or oysters, and soft shell crab: all fried golden



TNT Roll & Spider Roll

brown and served with hushpuppies and French fries.

For beef lovers, the menu offers an 8 oz. Filet Mignon, a 14 oz. Center Cut Rib Eye, and Tournadoes of Beef, which are two four ounce beef medallions, jumbo lump crab, and house beurre blanc. A 12-and-under children's menu along with small plate dinners make this an affordable option for families with children. Many families are seated at tables scattered around the room where we are dining, in tables along windows offering those cherished dune lake views, and in other separate rooms that make the large restaurant appear intimate.

After key lime pie and crème brulee, we retreat to a lively bar where the Old Florida Fish House band is playing. That night two musicians entertain with saxophone, drums, and keyboard. Both belt out a medley of jazz and popular songs. The song "A Rolling Stone" sends couples to the roomy dance floor where they have plenty of space to spread out and gyrate in wild abandon to the pounding rhythm.

Northwest Florida still provides an abundance of wild nature that keeps us happy and laidback, then ready



for fun and adventure on a night out on the town where all our senses will be satiated with beautiful scenery, tasty food, and soulful music. An experience of Old Florida has exceeded our expectations.

Old Florida Fish House is located on Eastern Lake in Seagrove Beach, Florida. The restaurant opens seven days a week at 5 p.m. The Old Florida Fish House Band plays on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights starting at 8:30 p.m. For more information call (850) 534-3045 or visit www.theoldfloridafishhouse.com.



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The Red Bar: Leave Your Troubles Behind

BY SUSAN BENTON

Dining at the beach can be quite an adventure, and South Walton restaurants each have their own unique character. After living in the area for nearly two decades, one of the eateries that I can always count on for great drinks, good food, and a good time is The Red Bar in Grayton Beach.

With an eclectic mix of locals, tourists, musicians, artists and yuppies, The Red Bar offers something for everyone and all feel welcome. Often called Northwest Florida's own Key West, Grayton Beach and The Red Bar represent the quintessential laid-back lifestyle that many folks are drawn to.

Though the formal name of this funky eatery is Pico's-The Red Bar, Belgian-born and culinary trained Oliver Petit's beloved establishment is well known worldwide as simply, The Red Bar. He says, "I wanted to create a place that felt good, where everyone could leave their troubles as they entered the door."

Situated beside one of the most pristine beaches in the world, this iconic bar and eatery was once Grayton General Store, which supplied the community with groceries, bait, beer, and served as the social hall complete with juke-box for dancing on Saturday night. The décor is wildly charming with Christmas lights strung across the ceiling that also showcases several European antique chandeliers and a disco ball. Album covers and foreign film posters cover every inch of the interior walls and ceiling as well.

With a limited chalkboard menu and the fresh catch changing daily, you can't go wrong choosing any of the dishes highlighted. You also won't leave hungry, as the portions are quite generous. My favorites include the ever-popular pan-seared chicken that is pan-seared and topped with a lemon bierre blanc sauce and capers, then served atop an infamous mound of house-made mashed potatoes; and the legendary crab cakes packed with lump crab and claw meat. The baked eggplant stuffed with shrimp and scallops is another customer favorite, as is the penne pasta with crawfish and shrimp in a tomato-based sauce.

The Red Bar offers a variety of luscious desserts that will satisfy any sweet tooth, like moist bread pudding, gooey chocolate brownie, and Petit's personal favorite, key lime pie. Don't even think about leaving without trying the incredible and soul satisfying Apple Dumpling- a whole apple baked in a dumpling, served piping hot with a caramel glaze, vanilla ice cream, chocolate drizzle, and whipped cream. It is pure heaven!

Sunday Brunch is the perfect time to sit back and unwind with family and friends while sipping on one of the best Bloody Marys in the Panhandle; spicy and refreshing, it is almost a meal within itself.

Plan to arrive early for dinner or brunch to get the best seats at this psychedelic beach shack, as crowds can be seen lining up by the magnificent hand-painted front door prior to opening. In spring and summer expect a



Penne pasta with crawfish and shrimp.



Pan seared chicken with capers and mashed potatoes.



wait. The off-season is the perfect time to visit The Red Bar as the area is far less crowded, and you can linger on one of the velvet sofas, soaking in the festivities and entertainment.

Plan on bringing cash as credit cards are not accepted, and they do not take reservations, but an onsite ATM is available.

The Red Bar is located at 70 Hotz Avenue in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, 32459. They can be reached by phone at (850) 231-1008 or you can view the website: www.theredbar.com. Hours of operation are Wednesday thru Sunday Lunch 11 am-3 pm, Dinner 5 pm-10 pm, Bar 11 am-11 pm (12 pm Saturday and Sunday). They are open Thanksgiving week, but not Thanksgiving Day, and are closed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. March through Labor Day The Red Bar is open seven days a week.

Susan Benton is the owner of 30AEATS.com where she shares her passion for food and travel, and her commitment to promoting local farmers, chefs, artisans and restaurants along the Gulf Coast.

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A blue and white food truck is the background for the text. The truck has a blue upper section and a white lower section. A sign on the white section reads "GOTTA HAVE GRILL". The truck is parked outdoors, with trees and a clear blue sky in the background.

air stream dining

GOTTA HAVE GRILL

Barefoot BBQ

BY TAYLOR ARNOLD

Located in the heart of Seaside is a stick-to-your-ribs kind of restaurant, and the best part is you don't even have to wear shoes to order your meal. Just ask James Murphy and his wife Jenny, owners of Barefoot Barbecue in Santa Rosa Beach. "It's the 'no shirt, no shoes, no problem' vibe here," he says. "We want guests to feel welcome, and to come sun drenched from the beach, barefoot and sandy for great Southern, Caribbean, Texas fusion barbecue."

Murphy, as the locals call him, has plenty of experience in this arena. In fact, he and Jenny spent 12 years living in St. Thomas where they ran a barbecue restaurant called SIBS, famous for ribs. "I definitely feel like the Caribbean influenced my cooking," he says. "It's a little spicier and fruitier, and I always work with fresh products."

After just one visit to Grayton Beach, the Murphys were ready to call 30-A home, and it wasn't long before they opened Barefoot Barbecue in Seaside's Airstream District. "We recognized the need for a reasonably priced, large portion restaurant," Murphy says. "Ultimately, the recipes came from a melting pot of Caribbean, Southern and Texas barbecue influences."

The result is a silver food truck that attracts visitors and locals alike. "Here in this part of the South, pork rules by 60 percent," Murphy says. "However, when Texas comes to town, we can barely keep the brisket on the shelves. Our ribs are an everyday specialty." For this reason, he has a selection of barbecue sauce to suit every taste. His menu

the end. The garlic-buttered Texas toast pork sandwich is the number one dish."

It is Murphy's selections of sides, however, that really showcase his barbecue fusion. "Two of the popular side dishes, pineapple cole slaw and potato salad, are close friend's family recipes," he says. The menu also offers some Quick Bites, including a turkey leg, a bucket of ribs, and sausage on a stick. And guests who want to take

organic. There is no cutting corners. Our smokers are very modern, but we use old school cook tables: 24-hour pork, 9-hour brisket, 5-hour ribs, 4 and a half hour chicken, and 3-hour turkey legs."

If you ask Murphy what inspires him after all these years, he is quick to name some of his favorite chefs. "When I first got serious about creating a barbecue restaurant, I looked to several of the barbecue 'greats,' including Mike



Barefoot Barbecue



includes traditional tomato, vinegar, and mustard-based sauces as well as a spicy variety.

The menu at Barefoot Barbecue also includes traditional favorites like pulled pork and beef brisket sandwiches, as well as signature items like barbecue nachos and tuna dip. "We are really proud of our sushi-grade, two hour, pecan wood smoked tuna dip," Murphy says. "The barbecue nachos are one of our biggest sellers, but tradition wins in

Barefoot Barbecue to go can ask for a picnic package that includes either a full or half pound of pork, chicken, ribs, or brisket.

When it comes to his philosophy on barbecue, Murphy's rule is simple. "We believe if you start with a good product, you end with a good product," he says. "All of our meats are hormone-free, steroid-free, and antibiotic-free; and the produce is fresh, local and



James Murphy

Mills and Ray Lampe," he says. "I also follow Bobby Flay, Anthony Bourdain, and Wolfgang Puck...I've read all their books. But if you gave me the chance to sit down and have a beer with any chef, hands down, Guy Fieri would be my first choice."

The best part of his job, however, is serving his famous beachside barbecue to happy guests day after day. "It is great meeting new people everyday, yet getting to see familiar faces year after year," he says. "We have built a good following on 30-A based on repeat

visitors to the area and super supportive locals. We couldn't and wouldn't be where we are today without the best of both of these worlds."

Barefoot Barbecue is located at 2235 East County Highway in Santa Rosa Beach. For more information, call (850) 534-0313 or visit www.facebook.com/barefootbbq.

The Meltdown on 30A

BY ANNE W. SCHULTZ



paired with melted cheese softness startles taste buds with contrasting textures. To take the chill off, add a side like Roasted Tomato Soup for a heartier meal. This is not the watered down Campbell's soup version you might remember, but a thick blend of chunky bits of tomatoes and onions with a tangy zip to it. "The Roasted Tomato Soup is a rustic Italian soup using local produce tomatoes roasted in olive oil and thickened with bread," Shirley explains. Beer and wine is available, along with soft drinks, pink lemonade, and free trade coffee. In another nod to 'green' practices, the soup is served in eco-product cups made from renewable plant materials.

The sidewalk café ambiance stimulates conviviality, where running into old friends and chatting with complete strangers enriches the casual dining experience. What a blessing to eat outdoors in Florida

A cold snap in our mild coastal weather offers locals and visitors a sampling of seasonal pleasures without the misery of snow and ice. Idyllic weather to curl up by a fire and read, slip on fleece for strolling quiet beaches or forest trails, and treat yourself to comfort foods. Chilly weather triggers an instantaneous craving for these standbys of youth. We reach for them like we do for a blanket on a cold winter night to warm our hearts with fond memories of family, fun, and simple pleasures. Grilled cheese, an all-time favorite is found at Seaside, Florida, housed in an Airstream trailer along Scenic 30A. So when you "gotta have a grilled cheese", look for the shiny metal trailer next to the post office in Seaside, FL, line up, and order one.

"When an opportunity came to occupy a trailer, I already had the perfect fit," says Jim Shirley, chef and owner of the Great Southern Café located nearby on Seaside's Central Square. "Something my partner Kelli and I always do for fun is whip up grilled cheese sandwiches at home. We experiment with different breads and cheeses, and try a variety of fillers. Both grandmothers—one in Louisiana and one in Georgia—used cast iron skillets and inserted slivers of ham."

Shirley applies the same creative innovation to his extensive menu; offering an assortment of gourmet

Something my partner Kelli and I always do for fun is whip up grilled cheese sandwiches at home. We experiment with different breads and cheeses, and try a variety of fillers.

versions along with the classic American cheese and a daily chef's special. Aiming to please all ages, servers add special touches like cutting off the crust for the Little Meltdowns. For more sophisticated palates, indulge in two favorites: the 3 Cheese with gouda, cheddar, and gruyere; or the Smokin' Turkey made with jack cheese, smoked turkey, bacon, avocado, and Albuquerque sauce. Another tasty choice is the Brie and Bacon on Cranberry Walnut Bread.

Whatever you order, childhood expectations are exceeded when you bite into gooey rich cheese oozing between thick slices of Texas toast grilled to golden-brown crispiness in a sandwich press. A crunchy crust

sunshine while most of the country shivers in snow and ice. The word is out. Shirley says children are part of that, "Most of the children running around Seaside wear our t-shirts that read: I had a meltdown on 30-A."

One couple shares how they heard about the spot. "Our neighbors in Sandestin say this is the best sandwich in God's creation." Can't beat that for a recommendation!

The Meltdown is located in Seaside, FL at 2235 E. Scenic Highway 30A. It opens at 10:00 am until closing at 9:00 pm. Visit www.meltdownon30a.com to learn more.

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www.TheBeachGroup.com

Let's Be Frank

Wild Bill's Beach Dogs is Saucy in Seaside

BY LAUREN GALL



If you have ever visited Seaside then you are probably already familiar with several of Bill and Heavenly Dawson's delicious establishments, such as Heavenly's Shortcakes, Pickles Beachside Grill, Dawson's Yogurt and Fudge Works, and the Shrimp Shack. However, the most satisfying endeavor of them all might have come recently in the form of an airstream trailer, directly off the Seaside square, named Wild Bill's Beach Dogs.

In January 2011 the Dawsons, who are passionate about good food that is good for you, approached Seaside about one of the airstream vendor trailers as a grass-fed hot dog stand, and the business was born. However, the business was first considered back in 2008 when Heavenly Dawson learned of a healthy hot dog, made from grass-fed cows, in San Francisco. At the time, the company producing the product, Five Dot Ranch, was still on the cusp of growth and could not accommodate enough product for supply here. The Dawsons sat back and waited, never abandoning the idea. Three years and a lot of hard work later, Wild Bill's Beach Dogs came to fruition.

"We knew that we wanted to stay focused on our idea of a healthy hot dog that was good for you and delicious. Everyone, for the most part, loves a good hot dog and we wanted to offer that to the residents and visitors of

Seaside," says Bill Dawson. "Heavenly is also very committed to providing and serving food that is not only tasty, but that is very healthy for the customer as well. After our market research visit to the ranch in California, we knew that this would be a perfect fit for the town of Seaside."

Wild Bill's Beach Dogs offers a dog for everyone, young to old. The first, the Frank dog, is the classic frank and showcases that traditional hot dog taste. The second, dubbed the Mutt, is a dog made of

mustard; made by Heavenly. Bill also recommends the famous signature devil sauce as an extraordinary addition to your dog. "You can only get the devil sauce at Wild Bill's. I recommend that you use it sparingly on your dog, but it is so good that it can't be bad," says Dawson. "It's like heaven without the heartburn."

When asked about the unique business name, Bill Dawson chuckles and responds, "We asked several people to submit potential names for the business and had over forty names recommended. Heavenly chose the name



Frank Dog

50 percent grass-fed beef and 50 percent grass-fed pork. The third option, Heat, is a spicy pork sausage dog for those that crave something with a little punch. The fourth option, the Brat dog, features a classic bratwurst flavor in a healthier package. The fabulous fifth option is the Bird dog, a scrumptious turkey dog packed with flavor. "We have a no junk policy," says Bill Dawson. "We know food that tastes good comes from produce with no added hormones, no antibiotics, and no nitrates. Plus, the added bonus is that not only do the dogs taste great, but they are all good for you."

And...if those five options don't fully satisfy your craving and you yearn for something a little sweeter, Wild Bill's still has one more option for you...the Cool dog, an ice cream inspired creation served on a sweet, sponge cake bun and inspired by Heavenly Dawson herself. "The Cool dog is a very popular selection, especially with the kids," says Dawson. Wild Bill's also offers several extras for the dogs, including made-from-scratch chili, and

Beach Dogs out of all of the submissions. We sent the name over to our logo designer, David Degregoria, and just asked that he design something very retro, Route 66 inspired. He actually added the Wild Bill's to the name and recommended that we have some fun with it. Hence, the full business name became Wild Bill's Beach Dogs.

"We are so fortunate to have Wild Bill's Beach Dogs and all of our businesses here in Seaside," says Dawson. "This truly is a special place for people of all generations, all ages, and most of all families. There is a little bit of something for everyone and we are pleased that our businesses, including Wild Bill's Beach Dogs, helps provide that for locals and visitors alike."

Wild Bill's Beach Dogs is located in the Land Yacht District in Seaside, directly off of Highway 30A and immediately across from Bud & Alley's and The Shrimp Shack. For more information, call (850) 231-0802 or visit www.sweetwilliamslltd.com or www.letsbefrankdogs.com



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The Adams Farm: 109 Years and Still Growing

BY RYAN LOFTIS

“It’s kind of in your blood,” Nolan Adams says of farming. No surprise there. Adams is the third generation owner of the 400-acre Adams Farm in Laurel Hill, which has been in his family since 1903.

What has it been like having a family business for more than a century? “We call it an anchor, a safe haven,” Adams says laughing. “In case things didn’t go well elsewhere, we had this to come back to. There’s nothing quite like turning the soil in your plow in the spring.” Of course, things have changed over the years. “In those days we had 40- or 50-horsepower tractors and it was very hands on.” Adams credits the economic philosophies of his grandfather and father for helping keep the farm afloat during difficult economic times. “They were very frugal. They didn’t buy things they probably would have liked to have.”

Adams first added 40 acres to the farm in approximately 1960 and purchased the remainder in 1999. Now 75 years old, the former schoolteacher has continued farming even after two heart operations. Indeed, as we talk he’s putting organic ant killer on fire ant beds. He explains the appeal: “It gives you a lot of personal freedom some other occupations do not.”

Free-range, natural grass-fed Red Angus cattle are raised at the Adams Farm. Adams uses rotational grazing, which involves placing a large number of cattle on one pasture to uniformly graze the plant growth at its optimum stage for peak nutritional value, and then rotating them to new pastures in one to three days, depending on the grass’s rate of growth. Why do it this way? For one thing, it naturally decreases the load of parasites presented to the animal, allowing for natural immune resistance to develop. Rotated animals are presented with fewer potentially disease causing pathogens. As a result, the Adams Farm has not had to use therapeutic antibiotics on the cattle in years (antibiotics are never used in the cattle’s feed or water).

Adams also maintains a closed herd. All of the livestock are born and raised on the Adams Farm. Outside livestock with questionable health are not introduced, sharply reducing the introduction of new pathogens into healthy cattle. However, Adams plans to stop cattle farming in the near future. “I think it will be difficult in this area to grow beef cattle.”

But there will still be plenty to do. Adams Farm has several orchards, including Asian Pear, Kiwi, and its largest, Fuyu Persimmon. The farm currently has more than 500 persimmon trees. Fuyu Persimmon is easily the most popular variety of persimmon. The Adams Farm mixes the Fuyu Persimmon with roasted peanuts, creating a trail mix that is very popular among customers.



Fuyu Persimmon Trees

All these fruits are available for purchase in \$30 30-pound boxes. A variety of fruits have been planted around the original farmhouse over time, including blueberries, pomegranates, figs, and blackberries. These items are not available for sale, but they’re used in the jams and spreads that are available. Adams is considering growing pecans, grapes, or more persimmons in place of cattle.

When asked what he considers his greatest accomplishment regarding his farm, Adams says, “I would guess it’s the promise of supporting my descendants in a

way that would be an equitable living style.” His plan is to pass the farm on to his two sons upon retirement. Is there much he needs to teach them? “Probably not. They’ve grown up around this farm. They probably know enough without me sitting them down and saying, ‘Do this, don’t do that.’ Some of those things you get through osmosis.”

For more information, visit www.theadamsfarm.com.

Cypress Cattle

BY DEBBIE MCCHESENEY



Luke Langford

When Luke Langford talks about his great-great uncle, W. J. Sapp, starting Cypress Farm in the late 1920's growing sugar cane and red potatoes, staples during the depression, you can almost picture him buttoning up his flannel shirt with hands rough and scarred from cutting trails and digging in his garden with primitive tools and no machinery. By the late 1930's Cypress Farm had transitioned to dairy. Luke's grandfather W. L. Comander was the next in line and began cattle farming on the land in the 1990's where he was joined by Luke's father. Luke himself, with four generations of family farming behind him, began the produce business and a sawmill, while continuing his cattlemen roots at Cypress Farm.

Langford graduated from Florida State University in 2003 where he met Laurie, a Miami native. They married and he lured her to the relative isolation of Ponce de Leon and the family farm. Laurie, as Luke says, "Experienced some culture shock...as you can imagine... but once we bought her horse, Hurricane, she felt right at home."

Emerging with a business degree, Luke expanded their market by selling to Wal-Mart, but soon realized they had a strong local following and got out of the commercial end of things. "So much of farming is learned in the trenches," he comments when asked how much his degree had helped the business. "Trying to make a predictable income out of something so unpredictable is trial and error."

In February 2011, Cypress Cattle and Produce opened their shop/vegetable stand in Freeport on Highway 331, a few miles north of the bridge. It is the perfect location for picking up fresh produce on your way to or from the beach. You walk through the entrance and witness a cornucopia of goods, and not just fruits and vegetables. In the refrigerator is milk so fresh it literally came from the cow just hours before arrival. The glass milk bottle proudly displays the quote "The hills shall flow with milk." Cheeses, butter, fresh smoked hams, bags of fresh basil, arugula, kale, spinach, and brussel sprouts line the cold shelves. On the homemade shelving made from the Cypress Farm sawmill

sits fresh baked bread, tupelo honey, bananas, corn, squash, red potatoes, peas, strawberries and collard greens.

Luke laughs as he says, "I planted lots of Asian greens: bok choy, Napa cabbage, and some others, but I am not so sure where I planted what, so it will be a surprise when they begin to grow in the spring." I pictured a vast patchwork of different shades of green and textures of all designs covering the beautiful fields of Ponce de Leon and vowed to make a visit in the spring to Cypress Farm.

"The snowbirds stop in and they want to eat southern greens but they have no idea how to cook them. There is the right way and then there is every other way. We give them a recipe card with a pack of seasoning and send them confidently on their way to cooking fantastic southern cuisine," says Luke. Laurie contributes to the recipes and gives canning tips.

Cypress Farm also runs a portable sawmill and sells rough cut yellow heart pine, long leaf pine, oak, cedar and green cypress. They sell custom made products like fireplace mantels, benches, bookshelves, and planters, and also provide lumber to boat builders.

As if this isn't enough to keep them busy, Cypress Farm hosts an adventure day for all the local third graders, about 600 children. They set up stations for the students to visit, where they can plow potatoes, pick melons, and learn all about corn and its various stages.

There is nothing that tastes better to me than a great tomato sandwich. I usually skip them in winter because the tomatoes in the grocery store have little in common with the summer ones from the vegetable stands. I made an exception and took a bag of heirloom tomatoes from Cypress home, and enjoyed a fantastic tomato sandwich in mid-January. What a treat!

Cypress Cattle and Produce Stand can be found at 16564 US 331S Freeport, FL 32439. They are open Monday-Saturday 9-5 and Sunday 11-4. Cypress Farm is located on R M Ward Rd. in Ponce de Leon, FL. Go to www.cypress-cattle.com or call (850) 880-6955 for more information.

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Dragonfly Fields: Farmers Charles Bush and Shueh-Mei Pong

BY SUSAN BENTON

There is a history among the vendors that supply good food to meet our needs at The Seaside Farmers Market on 30-A. Each Saturday they bring their best to sell, often educating the public about what they do and why they do it.

One of the hardest working husband and wife teams that I have had the pleasure of meeting is Charles Bush and his wife Shueh-Mei Pong, owners of Dragonfly Fields. They take great pride in their work and in educating those interested about the varieties of produce they grow.

Charles writes the Dragonfly Fields weekly newsletter, updating subscribers like myself on what will be at market in order to prepare. He talks about what has happened on the farm that week, the troubles and successes with their crops, and offers tips on alternate uses for cooking their produce.

Each season brings excitement as the newsletter changes. I for one am elated at the first sighting of their Aunt Ruby's Green German Heirloom Tomatoes, by far one of the best things I have ever eaten.

I met Charles and Shueh-Mei many years ago when I settled in the area, several years before they had Dragonfly Fields. From our first conversation I could tell their passion for farm to table cuisine ran deep.

They were one of the first restaurant owners in Seaside, running Basmati's Asian Cuisine in The Motor Court, prior to moving the restaurant to its current location in Blue Mountain Beach. Shueh-Mei, a talented and gifted chef, prepared her native Taiwanese cuisine and served fresh local fish and vegetables.

The couple sold their restaurant in 1997. Charles took a position in wine sales for a wholesale distributor, while Shueh-Mei worked with the Viking Store as manager.

Charles and Shueh-Mei have a love for travel and on many of their journeys found inspiration through the foods they ate, especially produce.

Charles says, "We had a restaurant, saw what other restaurants were using, and thought, wouldn't it be great to grow this and offer it to other people?"

There was no real intention of buying land, but it was in the back of their minds as they leisurely drove through Walton and nearby counties dreaming of the farm they might one day have.

In 2004 that dream became a reality with the purchase of what is now Dragonfly Fields. Located on seventeen acres in northern Walton County, north of downtown Defuniak Springs, Charles and Shueh-Mei became gardeners in 2005, with Charles becoming a full-time farmer in 2006, and Shueh-Mei following in 2011.

They named their business Dragonfly Fields to emphasize they are a field and not a farm with more acreage. Charles and Shueh-Mei are the only two working in the field, which is labor-intensive and time-consuming.

Dragonfly Fields' main production is vegetables with about twenty to thirty varieties of produce. They are especially known for arugula, salad mix, Asian greens, strawberries, mustard greens, tomatoes, zucchini,

Charles and Shueh-Mei are having a great time at the Seaside Farmers Market reconnecting with old friends, those in the restaurant business, and building relationships with new customers. They say they now have the best of both worlds, as they are still touching the plates of customers in many fine restaurants and doing what they love.

Photography courtesy of Eric Marcus

Charles Bush



Shueh-Mei Pong



Aunt Ruby's Green German Heirloom Tomatoes



eggplant varieties, and patty pan squash to name a few.

In order to promote an environmentally sound, healthy, and sustainable approach to growing vegetables, Charles and Shueh-Mei use natural fertilizers, intense cultivation, vermicomposting, cover crops, and crop rotation.

Prior to coming to the Seaside Farmers Market in 2009, Charles and Shueh-Mei sold only to area restaurants and to For The Health Of It on 30-A in Blue Mountain Beach. After many years of being in the restaurant business, they knew what products the chefs were looking for and provided it to them. The couple ensure that the food they grow will look as good as it tastes.

Dragonfly Fields is located at 1600 County Hwy 192, Defuniak Springs, FL, 32433. Charles Bush and Shueh-Mei Pong are vendors at the Seaside Farmers Market located on 30-A in Seaside, FL. Market hours are Saturday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Fall and winter hours are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Charles and Shueh-Mei can also be reached at dragonfly1600@embarqmail.com.



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Georgia Oil Barons and Their Liquid Gold

BY SUSAN BENTON



Georgia Chef Dave Snyder using GOF oil



Jason inspecting olives

Sitting at the counter of Modica Market in Seaside, I shared a bite of breakfast with Jason Shaw, part owner of Georgia Olive Oil and recently elected Georgia state legislator. Eager to hear what inspired his family to begin growing and harvesting Italian olives in the Deep South, Shaw, a friendly Southern gentleman, jumped into the conversation as if we had known each other for years.

Shaw says, "I became interested in olives and olive oil in 1996 when studying abroad with the University of Georgia in an undergraduate program in Verona, Italy. I visited an olive operation and was amazed. I also acquired a taste for good 'fresh' olive oil, like one does for wine or Scotch."

Years passed, but Shaw never let go of the prospect of olives as a cash crop, and he felt strongly that olives could grow in South Georgia like Italy or Spain, saying, "It is as hot as hell and humid here, just like there, so I just knew it could work!"

Shaw's cousin, Kevin, already managed their family farming operation and had his own successful product line with his wife Gayla, called Gayla's Grits (galasgrits.com), using a local grist mill. Jason Shaw says this showed him there was a demand for local and sustainably grown fresh products.

Shaw says, "My brother Sam, a local bank president, started looking at the numbers on olive oil production. We contacted Mark Hanly, a Brunswick, GA doctor who had been experimenting locally with a couple of hundred olive trees; and with growers in the California wine country who were raising hardy varieties like Arbequina, Arbosana, and Koroneiki, in groves some fifteen times as thick as those found on a typical European farm. We invested in saplings, installed our initial acreage in the spring of 2009, and have added more each year."

Shaw and his family are not new to the farming industry, as his family has owned land and been involved in farming for a long time. Jason Shaw also owns two insurance agencies, his cousin Kevin is a full time farmer who runs a large row-crop farming operation, his brother Sam is President of Farmers & Merchants Bank in nearby Homerville, GA., and his father recently retired from the Georgia state legislature. Shaw says, "We all grew up working on the farm."

Georgia Olive Oil produces 100% Arbequina oil that will continue to be limited in supply until enough of the newer orchards reach production age. The 70% Arbequina is made from their two other varieties, Arbosana, and Koroneiki.

The Shaws' initial reserves of olive oil are bound for many award-winning Southern chefs, including Chef Joseph Lenn of Blackberry Farm, Chef Chris Hastings of Hot and Hot Fish Club, Chef Linton Hopkins of Restaurant Eugene; and Charleston's Sean Brock (Husk, McCrady's), who has already planted several Shaw-provided saplings on his acreage outside Charleston. Purveyors carrying Georgia Olive Oil are The Earth Fare Stores in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida; and Star Provisions in Atlanta, to name just a few. Locally, Georgia Olive Oil is being used on the plates at Fish Out Of Water, and can be found for purchase at Modica Market in Seaside.

Shaw says, "Modica is our main partner on 30-A; we think a lot of them and really appreciate their support. High-end shops like Modica are perfect for carrying our product because they have so many customers who really appreciate products such as our oil."

Georgia Olive Oil has plans in progress for future tours, a milling operation, tasting room, and a gift shop on the property. They will offer retail during the holidays, and those hours will soon be on their website, georgiaolivefarms.com. For oil sales and general information call Jason Shaw at (229) 561-0960; for tree sales or orchard development call Sam Shaw at (229) 560-5615. Specific growers call Kevin Shaw at (229) 356-3647.

Mac Farms:

Using Hydroponics to Grow the Highest Quality Produce

BY RYAN LOFTIS

Imagine a system that allows food to be grown in places where traditional agriculture is impossible. Imagine a system that requires mere fractions of the water, nutrients and fertilizers that soil-based agriculture requires. Imagine a system that reduces transportation requirements, thereby reducing prices and greenhouse gas emissions as well. Not to mention a system that offers a shorter harvest time.

Imagine? You don't have to. It's a branch of agriculture called hydroponics, and it's what Andy and Jennifer McAlexander use to grow produce for their Mac Farms in South Walton.

With hydroponics, plants are not grown in soil. Instead, water is the delivery system for all required nutrients. The McAlexanders chose to use hydroponics because it offered more stability in plant growth without the constant need to amend the sandy soil of South Walton. But they aren't the first: The history of hydroponics spans thousands of years. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, built around 600 B.C. are widely believed to have functioned by following hydroponic principles. The Aztecs developed a system of floating gardens based on hydroponics during the 10th and 11th centuries. Formal research and publications on hydroponics began in the 17th century, although it wasn't until 1929 that experiments were conducted to determine its commercial crop growing ability. William Gericke, a Berkeley scientist, coined the term "hydroponics" after growing enormous tomatoes in his home using water and nutrient solutions.

The McAlexanders' own history goes like this: Married for 10 years with two children, they have lived in South Walton for a decade. "We have always loved fine food and the culinary arts," Jennifer says. "Andy grew up with a family of farmers. He has always had an interest in growing vegetables as a hobby." Conversation with local chefs helped turn that interest into a business. "We love the density of talented chefs along 30-A and had come to know a few. We had asked about the availability of local products and their desire for it. The answer was always, 'We would love it.' As our community has grown, we felt the need to somehow contribute to the local food movement." Mac Farms opened in January of 2009.



Andy and Jennifer McAlexander

Rather than an enclosed greenhouse, Mac Farms produce is grown in the brilliant 30-A sun. Produce is watered through the hydroponic drip system, in which a nutrient solution is added to the well water through an injector pump and is distributed through drip lines into many pots filled with coconut core fiber and perlite. The McAlexanders use organic seed sources and cultivate their own heirloom tomato seeds. Predator pests and organic oil sprays, not synthetic pesticides, are their means of fighting bugs and fungus. "We have high standards for cleanliness while harvesting," Jennifer says. "We are conscious of food safety and try to employ the best methods to deliver the best product. Our goal has been to grow the highest quality produce in South Walton for our local chefs."

What will you find growing on a stroll through the garden? Arugula, for starters, with lobed green leaves and spicy flavor. With an assortment of up to 20 varieties of lettuce, the spring mix offers a variety of color, shape, taste and texture. Add arugula and three varieties of mustards



and you have the Mesclun Mix. And there's more, including basil, dill, cilantro, flat leaf parsley, fingerling potatoes and heirloom tomatoes.

"It is important to think not only about what you are eating, but where it comes from, when it was harvested and how long it has traveled," Jennifer says. "The ability to provide some of the finest produce consumed on 30-A is something that we are proud of. It helps that the chefs using it are extremely talented. When you taste our arugula, tomatoes or other produce, there is a distinct difference in flavor. Chefs enjoy the ability to request certain products and have things delivered quickly if needed."

Jennifer considers good relationships with clients and the ability to increase production the highlights of Mac Farms' first 2 years. She also wants to give credit where credit's due: "If it wasn't for the support of Jim Richard and staff at Stinky's Fish Camp, Ken Duenes at Café Thirty-A, and Ed Reese, we would not be where we are today. We can't thank them and our other local chefs enough for their support! Thank you!"

And the goal for Mac Farms' future? "Keep growing!"

For more information, visit www.macfarmsfl.com.

Moonlight Micro Farm Is Sowing The Seeds Of Change

BY SUSAN BENTON



Chandra Hartman is changing the way our community views food and on her agenda is sustainable living. She has resided in the area for more than fifteen years, has watched 30-A's growth, and after seeing the environmental impact first hand, founded Moonlight Micro Farm.

Hartman is originally from Frederick, Maryland, and grew up vacationing in Panama City Beach and South Walton. Her grandparents lived in the area, and after graduation, Chandra spent the summer with them and was captivated.

In 2000 she started a residential design business called CFH Design Studio, designing custom homes on the Gulf Coast. In 2005, Hartman went back to school to study sustainable design, as she felt a deep connection with the environment and wanted to incorporate sustainable design into her home concepts. Hartman says, "Design is crucial in all aspects of our lives and especially in creating resilient systems." She became involved with the food movement when she saw the connections between rapid growth, industrial agriculture, and environmental destruction; and became deeply alarmed. Hartman found it important to help clients not only design a home, but show them how they could grow some of their own food, have a fabulous outdoor living space, and create that connection between the man-made and the natural environment.

In finding her passion for growing food and sharing this news with others, Hartman founded Moonlight Micro-Farm three years ago. Though she loved the idea



of having a farm, she did not have the land; so she started doing some research on hobby farms and urban farming where she stumbled upon the idea of growing sprouts and micro-greens. "It became my own personal challenge," she says. Hartman felt if she could tend a mini-garden consisting of several trays and a few buckets, she would be much more prepared for her dream farm. She says, "As soon as I started growing micros and sprouts and realized I could have something to eat in about a week, I was completely hooked!" Her interest in seeds and their origin grew as well when she discovered sprouting and growing your own food involved handling a lot of small seed.

Moonlight Micro Farm now offers heirloom and non-GMO open pollinated garden seeds, certified organic sprouting seeds, gardening supplies, books, and sprouting

kits at her online retail store, www.moonlightmicrofarm.com. The herb growing garden kit has been featured as a "top 5 hostess gift" on the popular Apartment Therapy blog.

Moonlight Micro Farm can also be found at The Seaside Farmers Market every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., where they began to sell seeds and sprouts two years ago. Hartman says, "I've been a big supporter of the farmers market since day one. I am a friend with Jenifer Kuntz, the market manager, and our interests are continually overlapping."

Hartman loves the community that is continually growing around the market, and enjoys learning about other vendors, their products, and connecting with people about growing food, eating healthy, and caring for the environment. She says, "I am continually

learning, and my customers are always teaching me new things." Her biggest sellers depend on the season. Right now what's hot are the tomatoes, such as Purple Cherokee, Suddith's Strain, and Brandywine. In the sprout department it is the French Salad Mix, which is a combination of clover, arugula, radish, and fenugreek seeds.

When not selling seeds and sprouts, Hartman offers workshops throughout the year geared toward beginning gardeners, like the upcoming Design Your Dream Garden, where students learn more about design, rather than getting their hands dirty. It will focus on permaculture, an ethics based design system with an emphasis on edible landscaping.

Hartman is looking forward to the growth of Moonlight Micro Farm and expanding the business with her talented photographer husband, Eric Marcus. Hartman claims he is crucial to her business, helping her every weekend and making the products shine online. She laughs, "He does pretty good with a shovel and wheelbarrow too!"

Their next big step is to offer their own saved locally sourced seed and seed. I see Moonlight Micro Farm expanding to be an invaluable source for creating small-scale food solutions and a resilient future, both regionally and beyond.

Visit Moonlight Micro Farm at the Seaside Farmers Market in the Seaside amphitheater on Saturdays from 9 am to 1 pm or at www.moonlightmicrofarm.com. Email Hartman directly at chandra@moonlightmicrofarm.com.

Chandra Hartman





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Priceless Health Hydroponics: Floating Farm Fresh Produce To Your Table

BY SUSAN BENTON

Shawn and Patsy Alloway know what it takes to make things grow on the Gulf Coast. After years in the palm tree and landscaping business, they are now the proud owners of Priceless Health Hydroponic, a hydroponic produce farm in Northwest Florida.

Both Shawn and Patsy grew up along the Emerald Coast in Panama City Beach and have been married for nineteen years. They chose to raise their three daughters in their hometown, while running their family landscaping business in the region, until a storm changed all that for them in 2008.

remember catching him on the computer all of the time studying hydroponics. Once he set his mind to do it, that was it!" Shawn and several employees erected two 100-foot long, 18-foot wide, 1800-square-foot ponds, completing them in the first week of December 2010. Patsy says, "On March 24, 2012, we floated our first hydroponic lettuces and never looked back!"

Hydroponics is a subset of hydro culture and is an 18th century method of growing plants using mineral nutrient solutions in water without soil. Terrestrial plants may be grown with their roots in the mineral nutrient

The Alloways have made hydroponic and soil farming a family affair and this summer moved their home to Marianna. They realized they had to be on the farm all the time. Patsy says, "It is a 24 hour-a-day thing. With hydroponics, the pH, Electrical Conductivity level, and temperature has to be constantly and consistently monitored. All of our family members work on the farm now. Our 8-year-old picks okra for the Seaside Farmers Market on Saturday and also loves to eat the cucumbers from the vine! Our 12-year-old gathers eggs and helps her dad till the ground for the heirloom tomatoes that have steadily been growing on the pond."

Priceless Health Hydroponics only uses organic seeds and they do not use herbicides or pesticides. Currently they produce hydroponic lettuces, such as Boston Bib, Baby Romaine, Mesclun Mix, and Lolla Rosa. They also grow Hydro Basil, Cilantro, Watercress, Sunflower Sprouts, Radish Sprouts, Spicy Micros, Arugula, Kale, and Heirloom Tomatoes. In addition, they produce soil grown cucumbers, crookneck and patty pan squash, bell peppers, zucchini, pumpkins, and gourds. Patsy says, "We also make homemade salsa that we sell at the Seaside Farmers Market, and we have chickens that lay an array of eggs, ranging in color from white, to blue, to green, to brown speckled! The locals love them!"

Priceless Health Hydroponics offers the unique concept of hydroponic grown fresh vegetables, and the Alloways believe they are one of the few farmers in the area offering Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) services, straight from their farm to your dinner table. Patsy says, "We are starting our first turn around this year from 2011. I would love to invite everyone to check us out on Facebook at Priceless Health Hydroponics. The details on weekly pick-ups and times will be available there."

Priceless Health Hydroponics can also be found on the delicious menus at Tommy Bahamas' Grand Boulevard, Café Thirty-A in Seagrove, V Seagrove, and George's in Alys Beach.

You can purchase Priceless Health Hydroponics at the Seaside Farmers Market in Seaside on Saturday from 9am-1pm, at The Coastal Market in Pier Park located in Panama City Beach, or by emailing Patsy at phorganics@yahoo.com.

Priceless Health Hydroponics is located at 5392 North West Twin Ponds Road in Marianna, Florida, 32448. You can reach them by phone at (850) 762-2225.

Susan Benton is the owner of 30AEATS.com where she shares her passion for food and travel, and her commitment to promoting local farmers, chefs, artisans and restaurants along the Gulf Coast.



The Alloways had acquired a five thousand square foot greenhouse that sat on twenty acres in Marianna, Florida, where they grew palm seedlings. Unfortunately, a devastating lightening storm damaged equipment to the green house, which stopped irrigation, destroying thousands of their seedlings. One day, an employee jokingly mentioned to Shawn that he should try hydroponic farming and Patsy says, "After that, I

solution only; or in an inert medium, such as gravel, mineral, wool, clay, or coconut husk.

When the mineral nutrients in the soil dissolve in water, plant roots are able to absorb them. When the required mineral nutrients are introduced into a plant's water supply artificially, the soil is no longer required for the plant to thrive. Almost any terrestrial plant will grow with hydroponics.

Twin Oaks Farms Brings Real Food to the Coast

BY MARY WELCH



Renee Savary

Renee Savary is bringing a bit of Switzerland and healthy eating to the Florida coast. “I started the farm three years ago,” Savary says. “I wanted real food. I wanted the food to taste like it did when I was growing up in Switzerland. We knew what we were eating. Today, with all this processed food, you don’t know what’s in the can or the food.”

Savary started Twin Oaks Farm in Bonifay and currently has 94 acres of certifiably organic farmland. “I raise chicken and ducks for their eggs and meat,” she says. “They roam freely on pasture and eat bugs and grass. They enjoy the sunshine. They are fed a mix of certified organic grains without soy, we are 100% soy free farm.”

The animals are never given any sort of growth enhancer and so take 12 weeks to mature as opposed to a couple of weeks at commercial poultry farms. “Even when they say the chicken at the grocery store is organic it can be misleading,” she says. “Those chickens never see the outside; USDA definition of free range just means they have to be raised on the floor instead of a cage. Our chickens are a mix from an American and European breed. You can taste the difference.”

A former real estate broker, Savary also grows fruits and vegetables on the farm and turns a selection into delicious homemade organic preserves. “I make them the

way my grandmother, my mother, and my aunts did in Switzerland,” she says. “People ask me when I learned how to can. I don’t think I ever ‘learned.’ I just watched.”

Like her family, she doesn’t use pectin, citric acid, ascorbic acid or any other colorants or filler. “If you put in good fruit and certified organic evaporated cane juice, that’s all you need. The natural flavor shines through and it is very good,” she says. Each jar of preserves or chutney sells for \$7.50 and can be purchased online or at the Seaside Farmers Market, where Savary has a booth every Saturday.

“Everything I make and offer is certified organic,” she says. “If I cannot raise enough fruits to make my preserves, I buy from local organic farms. I believe in buying local.”

Twin Oaks Farm’s chickens and ducks are available at the Seaside Farmers Market, but they must be pre-ordered. Otherwise, whatever Savary made for that

week will be sold at her booth. Some of her most recent offerings have been a variety of other home-grown and home-made delights such as pear in a red wine compote, lemon confit (local lemons in organic evaporated cane juice), okra in curry sauce, sweet peppers, spiced eggplant chutney, golden plums in organic syrup, and pesto. She has also made a caramelized onion compote and organic chicken broth, ready to start a soup or used to make a risotto.

However, for the holiday season, she is making a special fig cranberry preserve, made from local figs and organic cranberries from Maine. “After I use up what I’ve ordered, that’s it,” she says. “I only order produce from growers I trust.”

Savary admits that her prices are higher than in the grocery stores; her eggs, for instance, are \$6 for a dozen. But she believes more and more people are seeing the value in buying and eating food without preservatives and other foreign ingredients.

“We are getting a very good response even though we charge a bit more,” she says. “People are realizing that cheap is not necessarily good for you – and you’re talking about your health. People are willing to eat better quality and maybe eat a little less to make up for the cost difference. But once you see and taste my eggs, my chickens and ducks and my preserves, you will be hooked.”



Tasting may be believing, but she and the owners of another local store, Raw & Juicy, think a little fun education may also be necessary. They sponsor a film series, “Growing Local, The Naked Truth about your Food,” on the last Tuesday of the month at the Repertory Theater in Seaside. She has a similar collaboration

on the second Tuesday of the month with Artesano Jewelry in Fort Walton Beach.

Savary has plans to expand but admits with a laugh that finances are hampering her dreams temporarily. “I’d like to enlarge and do more, but we’ll see. What I am happy about is that people understand what it’s like to eat natural, organic food. That make me very happy.”

To find out more, go to www.twinoaksfarm.net.

Buying Local: Chef Ed Reese Shares His Secrets

BY SUSAN BENTON

Every Southerner should know that one of the simplest ways to save money and still eat well is to buy in season. It still pays to buy local, even in this economy, and my Saturday stop on 30-A is the Seaside Farmers Market. The majority of eggs, dairy, breads and vegetables I use typically come from within a two-hour radius of my home and many farmers that I buy from have been recognized for their commitment to sustainable agriculture, such as that of Twin Oaks Farms in Bonifay.

I sat down with Chef Ed Reese of Edward's Fine Food and Wines in Rosemary Beach to get his take on using local produce in his restaurant's cuisine, and to share his philosophy. With six children of his own and a successful business, Chef Reese knows all too well about the real-life pressures facing consumers today and states, "If it's a decision between buying organic at the grocery store or fresh from your local farmers, I always choose local first."

More often than not, small farmers, like that of local Dragonfly Fields, primarily use organic growing methods, but many may not have the size or funds to be certified as organic.

Chef Reese says, "Get to know your farmers. You have to build relationships. I discuss my menu with them and many times I am inspired by what seasonal products they bring to me. Often the best is set aside for me as I am a repeat customer."

One of the farming families that Chef Reese and his wife Erin have befriended is that of their neighbor, Jen and Andy McAlexander of Mac Farms. Erin Reese says, "They literally live by us. We walk to Mac Farms and put time into farming as well."

Established in 2009, Mac Farms grows and distributes the highest quality locally grown herbs and vegetables available in South Walton, Florida, employing the hydroponic style of farming. With hydroponics, plants are not grown in soil, but instead water is the delivery system for all required nutrients. What butter is to biscuits, produce is to farmers Jen and Andy, and they are on a mission to share their sustainable gospel by getting their products on the finest plates in South Walton via local chefs like Ed Reese.



Chef Ed Reese

Currently Edward's Fine Food and Wines main purveyor is Mac Farms, which supplies the restaurant with local eggs, arugula, mixed greens, fingerling potatoes, squash blossoms, and eggplant, to name a few. Chef Reese says, "I just can't get enough of Jen and Andy!"

He continues, "In wintertime, when it is slow, I talk to them about what produce I'd like to see on my menu, and Jen will plant and grow it. In summer we use a ton of their tomatoes. A popular menu item is our Tomato Salad with Crab and Chili Oil." A seasonal menu item receiving praise is Chef Reese's Braised Pork Belly and Crab Rigatoni with Baby Kale, Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Thyme. Chef Reese says, "Jen grows the most beautiful produce!"

Another favorite menu item available each Thursday is the Fish and Grits. Organic stone ground grits from McEwen & Sons of Alabama are paired with local fresh fish prepared in a light brown butter sauce. Peach tendrils,

lemon, a splash of balsamic, and capers are layered over the top, and Chef Reese says, "You must try it, it's dreamy!"

Reese sources some of the restaurant's hydroponic lettuce from Cottondale Hydroponic and the fresh Gulf snapper, grouper, oysters, and clams from Water Street Seafood in Apalachicola. Chef Reese says, "I am taking simple ingredients and combining flavors together to make a great meal. I strive to buy local, be involved, and make a positive impact."

Edward's Fine Food and Wine is located at 66 Main Street in Rosemary Beach, Florida. They cater offsite, and offer private chef services and private parties at the restaurant. They do not take reservations. They can be reached at (850)-231-0550, or by email at info@edwards.30a.com. Dinner is served Tuesday through Sunday from 5 pm to 11pm, and they are closed on Monday. In the summer, Edward's is open seven days a week.

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