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Annual *Dining* issue

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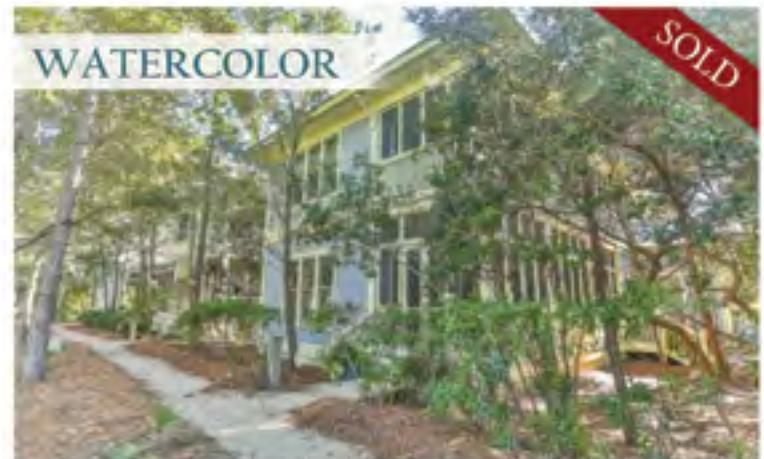
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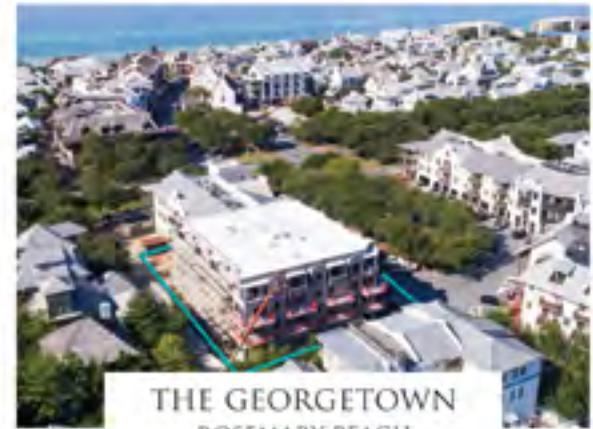
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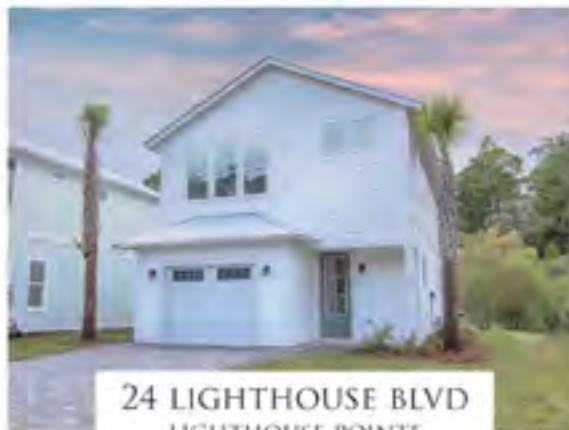
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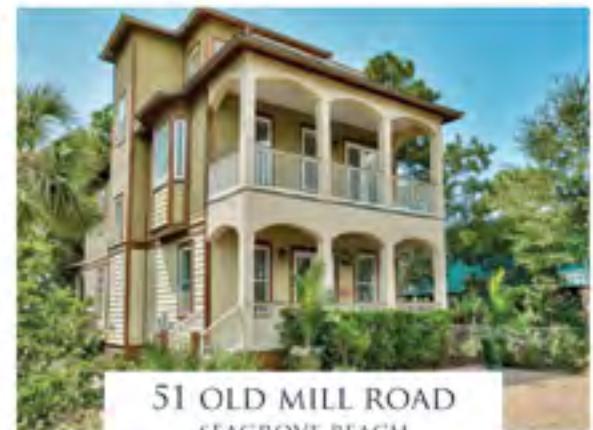
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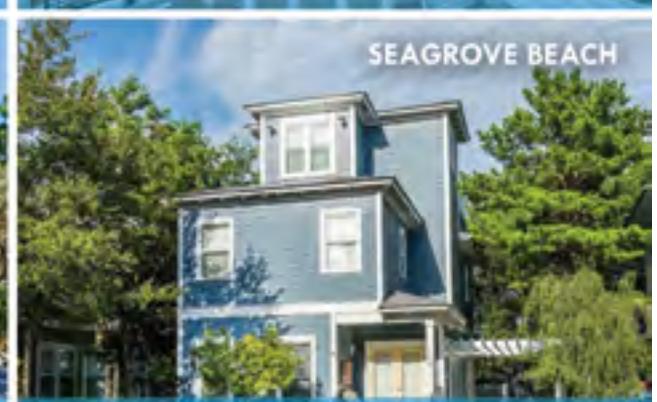
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letter from the publisher

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD



Food is often the center and focus of our home. It gives us something to celebrate about life every day, in the bounties of our family's table. Mealtime is not just about eating. It's about family and interpersonal relationships and our relationship with nature and the land. It's about laughter and trying new things, making new friends and celebrating old ones.

When we respect our food and the preparation of our food, we respect ourselves. When we take care to pay attention to the quality and sourcing of our food, we are taking care of ourselves and our families. By the same token, being responsible stewards of the land, means ensuring responsible and healthy generations to come. So you see, food is much more than, well, food.

As always, this annual dining guide is dedicated to celebrating the restaurants, chefs and farmers on 30-A and the surrounding areas. We have highlighted not only the most delicious restaurants and eateries but also the chefs and food purveyors that seem to care the most about giving you and your family the best quality food available.

So dive in, page by page, and then go research for yourself. After all, it's not just food.

Bon Apetito!

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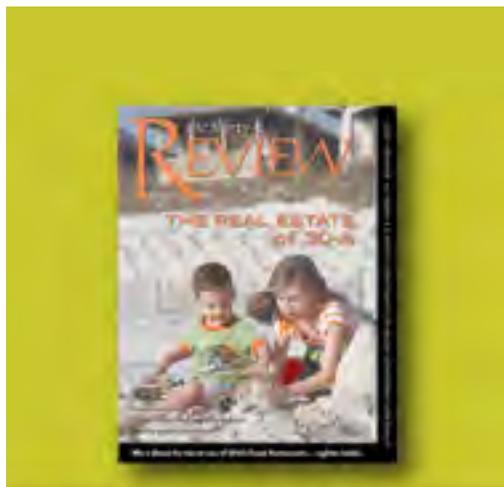
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Photography: Jacqueline Ward Images

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dining

Smoke Signals

Back Beach Barbecue Brings the Heat

BY SARAH MURPHY ROBERTSON

Just east of 30-A in Panama City Beach, Back Beach Barbecue is lighting their pit fires at 2:30 am so diners' 12-hour slow cooked meats will be on point.

Back Beach Barbecue opened in June 2017 by Danny and Monica Cosenzi. The couple may be best known along 30-A for fine dining at their Restaurant Paradis in Rosemary Beach, but this newest casual concept has been six years in the making and a dream come true. Through travel, research, recipe testing, and even trial smoking in the Cosenzis' backyard, Back Beach Barbecue is now a reality.

Danny and Monica have always emphasized their staff is really more like family. Back Beach Barbecue has been a collaborative effort. Chef/Partner Mark Eichin, Pitmasters Chris Mack and Shane Kirkland, and all around "MVP" Donnie Sellers have all been essential elements in its establishment.

Appreciating the art and science behind a great barbecue operation, Danny and his team set off for Texas to get a feel for how some of the best barbecue joints in the country do things. They were met with openness and generosity as barbecue pros like Frankin's, Black's, and Lockhart's. These venerated establishments showed them their time-tested methods for creating legendary barbecue.

Any barbecue enthusiast knows "low and slow" is the key to the tastiest meats. Back Beach Barbecue uses Lang reverse flow BBQ Smokers with their offset firebox design to create consistent killer meat. These cookers are often called "stick burners" because they burn wood on one side of the unit and the heat circulates around the proteins on the cooking compartment's side.

Back Beach is proud to feature true stick burning barbecue and they cook everything on these smokers. They've even affectionately dubbed their two original smokers "Smokey and the Bandit." (The third is named Buford, another homage to the classic movie's sheriff.)

What's a fire without fuel? Wood adds big flavor, and when using a stick burner, the type of wood makes a



Sliced Brisket and Sausage Sandwich



Sliced Turkey



Members of the Back Beach Barbeque Team

Photo by Alissa Aryn Photography

big difference. Back Beach only uses locally sourced and cured hard oak for a slow burn and clean heat.

When it comes to barbecue, keeping it simple means you are doing it right. "The rub we use doesn't have any sugar, it is simply a two to one ratio of black pepper and kosher salt with a few savory spices," Danny divulges. The goal is always to ensure the tender meat stands out.

So you see, Back Beach Barbecue did their homework and when they opened for business in June, they quickly found a loyal fan base. Diners eagerly line up to order

from a chalkboard menu at the counter, and hungrily watch as their selections are hand cut to order.

Danny explains, "You pay by the pound and can even ask us for just one rib or one slice of brisket." The array of meats includes, Texas-style brisket, pulled pork, chicken, turkey, sausage, and pork spare ribs. On Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays they also offer beef ribs until sold out. Their sausage is made in house with two kinds available – a zesty pork jalapeno cheddar and a spicy beef.

Keeping it classic, Back Beach prepares a red skin potato salad, coleslaw, macaroni and cheese, bbq baked beans, brisket Brunswick stew, and collard greens. The meats are served on butcher paper on trays and guests can further customize their order with a side.

Guests can also enjoy their "Q" on sandwiches, salads, or atop a loaded baked potato. The homemade dessert menu boasts even more old-fashioned goodness in the form of banana pudding and blueberry pie.

After all this effort, Back Beach certainly doesn't cut corners on the condiments. They make four house made sauces, including an Alabama White Sauce crafted from local Grayton Beer Company's Beach Permit Blonde Ale.

The feel of the restaurant mirrors the down home comfort food it serves up. This place is laid-back with open air dining – the perfect festive atmosphere to gather on the patio and spend time with family and friends. In addition to their Panama City Beach space, Back Beach Barbecue caters private or corporate events and has a beautifully equipped food truck with a full kitchen.

Back Beach Barbecue promises delicious food crafted from the dedication to true stick burning barbecue. For such a new operation, its commitment to tradition signals success for many years to come.

Back Beach Barbecue is located at 19714 Panama City Beach Parkway, Panama City Beach, Florida 32413. Open seven days a week for lunch and dinner beginning at 11 am. For more information you can find Back Beach Barbecue on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram or visit www.backbeachbarbecue.com.

Back to Business: Seagrove Village Market Cafe

BY SARAH MURPHY ROBERTSON



institution meant to the area and earliest homeowners.

When George and Ann Hartley purchased the Seagrove Village Market Cafe in 1999 it was, in their words, being in “the right place at the right time.” From the very start they wanted to build upon the culture, reputation, and beloved mainstays

out. The space is brand new with open, high ceilings – so bright and beautiful – but it definitely echoes the charisma of the old location and all the charm is still there. Much of the signage from the original restaurant adorns the walls and the countertop at the checkout area remains. George shepherds me into the men’s restroom to show one other treasure from the old space: the vintage fuse box that kept the operation buzzing for all those years. “More than one electrician has told me this belonged in a museum,” he laughs. Seems it was just as important to transplant the “heart” as well as the soul, you see.

The menu hasn’t changed much in all these years – with golden-fried grouper sandwiches and juicy burgers being offered from the start. But over time, the Hartleys expanded the menu to include fish tacos, fresh salads, and their signature sides like mac n cheese and fried green tomatoes. Everyone has a favorite here and the restaurant’s commitment to consistency makes any order on any day an excellent choice.

When the Hartleys and their team recently developed a few new additions to the menu, the andouille and shrimp po boy was added to the line-up. This promptly became George’s new pick, and he often orders it in lieu of his years-long go-to, the fried shrimp po boy. The garlicky spice and subtle kick from the sausage is a great complement to the tender shrimp. This po boy is sure to become an instant classic.

The Hartleys are quick to acknowledge they could never run this business alone and were pleased to find much of their loyal staff were patient and eager to return

when the market reopened in November of 2016. It is a family-run business committed to treating their customers and their staff as part of the family.

So now the new Village Market will greet old and new generations. Hungry customers will happily order their favorites, making memories and continuing the rich tradition started back when 30-A was just an unpaved road in between Panama City and Destin. As the signage from the original space promises, the Seagrove Village Market Cafe will continue its tradition of serving “Deep Fried Love...Since 1949!”

The market is located at 2976 S Co Hwy 395, Santa Rosa Beach. Hours are: Sunday, 10:30 - 2:30, Monday-Saturday, 10:30 - 8:30. Call (850) 231-5736 for more information.

So much of the magic and allure of 30-A is that tangible feel one gets from a sleepy beach town. It often harkens back to simpler days. Visitors to our area take great pleasure in “unplugging” while they are here – choosing bikes and walks over car rides, spending long, lazy days swimming, napping, or reading, and finally enjoying spectacular sunsets lighting up the gulf. So it is no surprise that over the years a trip to the oldest businesses along 30-A would become a must-stop destination.

Seagrove Village Market Cafe has an identity in this area that is unparalleled. It is itself almost a resident of 30-A and guests have a real reverence for this special spot. From day one, its current owners, George and Ann Hartley, have regarded this iconic restaurant with that same level of reverence.

Nostalgia can be found all around the history of the Seagrove Village Market. Since opening as a small market and mini mall in 1949, it has been a gathering spot in the Seagrove, Florida community. Generations of families have made the village market part of their family memories. In the earlier days, the Seagrove Village Market had one of the first and only pay phones in South Walton. The market also functioned as a hub for all the teenagers to meet, grab sodas, and hang out. The market was the keeper of keys to many of the cottages for years and years. This is a look inside what this



Fried Grouper Sandwich



Chicken and Waffles



Seafood Platter

of the cafe and they took some key advice from the previous owner to heart – buy fresh, cook to order, and serve with a smile. For 18 years they’ve followed his philosophy while also preserving the original integrity of his recipes.

With the closing of the original market in October of 2015, there was a lot of apprehension. How could the market live on? The Hartleys had the extremely fortunate opportunity to acquire the parcel of land just north of the spot where the original market stood.

Ann shares how important it was to the couple to keep the soul of the Seagrove Village Market intact. “We saved the booths and tables – look, they still even have all the names carved into them,” she’s excited to point

amici 30A Italian Kitchen

Qui Si Mangia Bene: Here One Eats Well

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

When Italian food is so much a family passion that you're constantly on the hunt for the best of the best when you travel, it's hardly a leap to conclude that the ultimate family pursuit would be to open a restaurant. Not just any restaurant; but an Italian restaurant.

After all, la famiglia is the very heart and soul of Italian food. For George and Amy Corchis and their four children, this led them to take George's many years of experience in the hospitality industry and open a restaurant of their own in South Walton. Here, their love for food and family could fill the hearts—and bellies—of people all along the coast.

However, their idea was not merely to open a standard pizza restaurant, but to create a true destination for all things autentico and fresh: from handcrafted pastas made fresh daily and available only in limited quantities, to Napoli-style pizzas made in their gas-powered brick oven with pillowy hand-tossed doughs and freshly prepared sauces.

Starting a restaurant from scratch took its share of research, as did finding the right chefs to carry their vision and bringing it to life. But after tasting the talents of chefs Lock and Sam, respectively now serving as Executive and Sous, the Corchis launched amici 30A Italian Kitchen in late December 2016, welcoming their first guests to sample the food that embodies the shared passion of their family. Each plate of food is a peek into what drives them, and many of their signatures bear their names: from guest favorites like Lilly's chicken piccata to Amy's amici 30A meatballs. The flavors are robust, deep in development, and fortified with an understanding of herbs, spices, and aromatics that shows in every bite. These are the studied works of cooks who know how to highlight their ingredients and create complexity through the simplest methods, methods that reflect the ways that Italians have cooked for centuries.

Along with pasta classics like rigatoni bolognese and handcrafted manicotti, there are a few flashes of playfulness—insights, one might say, into the personalities of la famiglia Corchis. These are displays of a willingness to be adventurous and witty without losing sight of their standard for excellence, and that ability to maintain that balance is one that shines though on the plate. Casting convention aside, the so-called “chicken parm pizza pie” loads on the fresh mozzarella and gravy—more commonly known as marinara—using a chicken breast as the “crust” to create a dish that is quite unexpected, both for its originality as well as for its boldness.

While there may be a few creative twists here and there, the menu generally resides in the realm of tradition, where the very things that make people fall so in love with

Italian food are explored with abandon to create an array of beautiful offerings that are truly inspired. Tender steaks, juicy chicken, and freshly caught fish and seafood are used to create masterpieces on a canvas of pastas



Clockwise from top: Focaccia with Rosemary, Chef Lock, Homemade Marinara Sauce, Pan Seared Black Grouper



and sauces perfect in their execution and presentation. But while such a superb delivery could well translate into an atmosphere demanding white cloth service and a dress code, the Corchis have built a restaurant that draws people in—not only with the quality of their food, but the welcoming environment where fun could practically share space on the menu. “We set out with the intent to create an atmosphere reflective of our home, where everyone comes to gather, and they all leave with a full belly and memories of a great experience,” Amy explains. “We have something unique here, and people really appreciate that. Our guests love having the opportunity to watch the show at our Chef's Counter; while our Executive Chef, Chef Lock, and our Pizza Maestro, Chef Sam, create their masterpieces; and they might even get to enjoy a sample or two!”

Samples are always a draw, but those samples are but a small bite of what's to come—and that is what keeps their guests coming back, time and again. They leave no

detail unattended, handcrafting as much of their menu as they can; from the cocktails at their impressive main bar to desserts so indulgent and addictive they could tempt even the strictest dieter to the dark side. At amici 30A, it's all about “friends, family, and full bellies...” and they definitely deliver on all three.

amici 30A Italian Kitchen is located at 12805 US Highway 98 East, Suite R101, Inlet Beach, Florida 32461. Open daily 11:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. For more information, call (850) 909-0555 or visit www.amici30a.com.

Riding the Wave: Seagrove's Newest Gem is Surfing Deer

BY SARAH MURPHY ROBERTSON



George and Ann Hartley have been residents of Seagrove Beach for nearly twenty years now. As business owners and devoted locals, they've always paid tribute to the historical significance of this 30-A community.

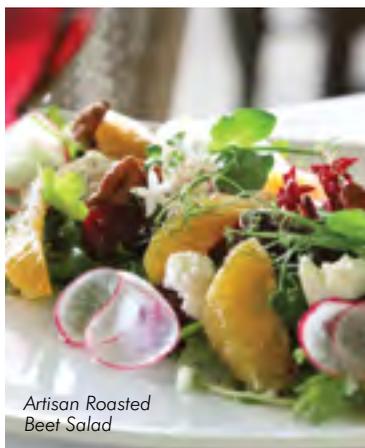
When it came time to re-concept their newest restaurant, previously V Seagrove, the Hartleys recalled the stories they had heard about one of the first landowners of the area. Back in the 1940s, Cube McGee recognized the diamond in the rough that would one day become Seagrove Beach. He decided to develop it and in the early days, as the area grew, he was a key figure. McGee also had an unusual pet – a deer he called Bambi. McGee and Bambi were often spotted frolicking on the beach at sunrise - in the morning surf. And, hence the inspiration for the name of the Hartleys' newest venture: Surfing Deer!

Surfing Deer is open nightly for dinner service and is a casual fine dining atmosphere. It is modern and comfortable with a soft color palette and coastal touches. They know families vacation together, and well-behaved little ones are welcomed with their own kids menu.

The Hartleys are thrilled to have Chef Gregory Smith leading the extremely talented culinary team at Surfing Deer. George shares how Chef Smith's precision, attention to detail, and cerebral approach to cooking has been an inspiration and an invaluable aspect to the restaurant's success.

The starters are unique and give a peek into the special meal to come. Their Surfing Deer Flatbread is naan topped with premium beef tenderloin, caramelized Vidalia onions, thin slices of fresh Mission figs, bleu cheese, and a balsamic glaze. It is sweet and punchy, herbaceous and tangy – a true testament to balanced composition.

The soup and salad section of the menu is full of familiar favorites like a caesar and wedge, but they are



Artisan Roasted
Beef Salad

spot-on with impeccable care taken in their craftsmanship. Try the Artisan Roasted Beet salad. Cubes of sweet, earthy golden and red beets top peppery greens and are garnished with farmers cheese, radish, juicy citrus, and the crunch of toasty Marcona almonds. This salad is bright, light, and sublime all in one.

Choosing an entree may prove to be a bit difficult. Hopefully your table likes to share! George loves the Stout Coffee Braised Beef Short Ribs served with horseradish and white cheddar mashed potatoes; he's a self-confessed meat and potatoes guy from Texas. The expertly prepared Caramelized Sea Scallops over farro with crispy kale has been deemed locally as a solid "11 on a 1-10 scale". Ann recommends their Seared Gulf Red Snapper. The fish is perfectly cooked and Asian influences in the coconut lemongrass emulsion, baby bok choy, and ginger infused black rice are its brilliant co-stars.

If you are stuffed, take a few minutes to linger, but be sure to order dessert. Their pastry chef is extremely talented and the sweet treats at Surfing Deer are some



Seared Gulf
Red Snapper



Banana Pudding
Cheesecake

of the best around. Get a slice of the Caramelized Banana Pudding Cheesecake – it takes the best of two classic desserts all nestled in a homemade vanilla wafer crust and drizzled with a rum caramel sauce.

While dinner service is primed to be an exceptional experience, the full dinner menu can be ordered at their beautiful bar, which also has its own

smaller bites menu. The fish and chips, made from gulf-fresh fish of the day, comes with fries and hush puppies and would be great while enjoying a couple of locally brewed draughts.

And if a nightcap or another glass of vino is in the cards, Surfing Deer has you covered with a well curated wine list ranging in special occasion bottles to more affordable sips. Their signature mixed

Cubes of sweet, earthy golden and red beets top peppery greens and are garnished with farmers cheese, radish, juicy citrus, and the crunch of toasty Marcona almonds.

drinks includes the Bambi Tini – a refreshing cocktail of Deep Eddy peach flavored vodka, fresh strawberries, lavender-lemon simple syrup and a fizzy splash of Prosecco.

Surfing Deer features a lovely private events room for celebrations of all kinds. It is complete with its own entrance and kitchen to serve guests. The window-lined space can seat up to 50 comfortably and is also furnished with audio-visual technology and a flat screen television. Many a special memory will be cherished in this room.

Surfing Deer has been open since November of this year and the excitement among foodies is growing as good news travels fast. Stop by soon, say hello to the unofficial mayors of Seagrove, and enjoy the creative culinary genius of Chef Smith. It's sure to be a night to remember and Surfing Deer is up for one smooth ride.

Surfing Deer is located at 2743 E Co Hwy 30A, Santa Rosa Beach. Hours are 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. M-S, closed on Sunday. Call (850) 213-4200 or go to surfingdeer.com for more information.

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Downhome Southern Belle Hospitality

BY SARAH MURPHY ROBERTSON

Cowgirl Kitchen's restaurants are popular for providing 30-A family-friendly "meals with moxie". But what many may not realize is all the ways their catering arm, Southern Belle, can bring that same flavorful and fun fare right into their homes. CK Southern Belle Catering offers a variety of chef-inspired meals that showcases the cuisine made for the kind of gatherings where people slow down, enjoy conversation, and time well spent together.

With a Southern-raised sensibility, Chef Steven Sandy skillfully prepares what folks crave most; and feeding a crowd has become his expertise. Chef Steven is from Tuscaloosa and trained in Montgomery; and he has been readying himself for this opportunity since he was a young child. "I remember how important family dinners always were," he reflects. Chef's earliest food influences came from his mom and for as long as he can remember he was included in Sunday's meal prep, be it picking shrimp or snapping beans.

Cowgirl Kitchen owner Nikki Nickerson and Chef Steven Sandy have a comfortable ease, playing off each other. Their great working relationship is evident. Nikki laughs as she recalls how Chef was "somewhat hazed" when first hired in the high season and working at their fast and furious restaurant locations. In the two years since, they have become a synergetic team with collaboration being the key to their success. "We constantly bring each other ideas and recipe development is definitely a joint effort," Nickerson says.

Actually involving all their team members in the testing process is important to Nickerson and Chef Steven. When introducing new taco combinations last season, they sat down with staff and everyone gave their input on which five would make the final cut.

The spacious prep kitchen used to craft their creations is located in Panama City Beach. When you enter, wafts from the delicious aromas of seasonally fresh roasted vegetables and premium-sourced meats are everywhere. You see, this catering kitchen also serves as the hub for preparing all those homemade salsas, salad dressings, to-go casseroles, and dips their Cowgirl Kitchen restaurants are known for.

Southern Belle Catering was started because Nickerson knew that planning meals for larger groups can be a feat. It is hard to get a reservation, and getting everyone ready and out the door can be a hassle. Who wants to wait for table service when tasty eats can come straight to you?

They offer tons of options for every occasion and palate. Southern Belle can do everything from whole roasted pigs to shrimp boils, taco bars with all the fixins, or even traditional BBQ dinners. If you are looking for



Southern Belle can do everything from whole roasted pigs to shrimp boils, taco bars with all the fixins, or even traditional BBQ dinners.

a healthful lunch, choose from a variety of classic salads like Cobb, Greek, or Caesar and then pick your proteins: roasted chicken, shrimp, seared tuna or steak, and finally your choice of dressings. Many times clients also like to work with Chef Steven to create a custom menu; such as adding Caribbean or Asian twists to their menus.

A great idea would be to consider them for breakfast delivery. Waking up to a family-style brunch with such options as egg casseroles, praline bacon biscuits, maple-



crusted French toast, or spinach Gruyere quiche sounds pretty heavenly to me.

Ready yourselves for the best part: CK Southern Belle Catering makes it incredibly easy to get all this deliciousness into your hands. You can pick up from their restaurant location nearest to you (in Seagrove or Rosemary Beach) or for a small delivery fee they'll bring it to you anywhere along 30-A. For larger affairs, their catering team will show up and do all the work from set-up to clean up.

Southern Belle offers an event space above their CK Feed & Supply Store in Rosemary Beach. This space is perfect for rehearsal dinners, family reunions or corporate events. It holds 50 people and has a clean, casual feel as well as gulf views. One of their favorite uses for that space is doing an oyster bar. As anyone knows, shucking is an artful skill best left to the pros. Let Southern Belle do all the work while you slip into nirvana one briny oyster at a time.

Southern Belle is all about taking care of people through food. They enjoy their role in helping folks make spending time together even easier. Sharing great food with great people sure is a satisfying profession and they are saddling up for another season of fun.

To place an order with Southern Belle Catering, visit their website at <https://southernbellecatering.col> or email them at catering@cowgirlkitchen.com with any questions. Placing orders with 48-72 hours notice is recommended.

Hand-Tossed Success

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

There's something warm and inviting about Angelina's Pizza and Pasta that seems to emanate from every green and white stripe in its front awning and white wooden board stacked along its façade. There's a charming appeal that can only be achieved through authenticity; and in creating a menu of authentic Italian food made with authentic passion, Angelina's has achieved a level of charm that permeates every plate and fills their restaurant with an aroma too delicious to resist.

Opened in 1994 by Brian and Jan Ethridge, Angelina's broke the mold for 30-A in becoming the first restaurant in the area to serve freshly made hand-tossed pizzas. As former natives of a region where pies are a point of contention; so much so that it can draw lines of division within a family; the undeniable quality and flavor of their kitchen's pizzas were certainly a point of pride for the Ethridges. And as Johnson and Wales-trained chef Jan developed the menu to add classically-inspired pasta dishes, signature entrees, calzones, and sandwiches, Angelina's continued to succeed in making its mark on SoWal, leaving in its wake a tidal wave of marinara.

Pizza is easily their claim to fame: with each pie having hand-tossed dough and classic toppings to stay true to the originals rather than bending to the trends. Freshly chopped vegetables, shredded cheeses, and seasoned meats meld together to create the perfect slice; each bite a reminder that pizza is, at the end of the day, simply beautiful when it is allowed to be simple. That point is well proven by its popularity. "By far, pizza is the best-selling thing on our menu," says Brian, whose own passion for tossing dough was developed long ago under the watchful eye of a pie guy in New Jersey. "We do everything from scratch here and that shows in the quality of our food."

Quality hardly hampers their ability to meet demand, however. And as such a hot stop for hot pies, that's certainly a strong point. "I love the challenge of seeing how many pizzas we can make on a Saturday night," laughs Executive Chef Shawn O'Drain, who has filled the role at Angelina's for the past twelve years.

"No matter how fast we're putting them out there, though, we never sacrifice on getting the details right. When it comes to giving a guest their best experience, those fine details are what it all comes down to, and that's what makes us such a success. That's why people love coming here—and that's one of the points of our pride and our passion here."

Admittedly, not everyone is always in the mood for a slice, but with classic dishes like lasagna, fettuccini Alfredo, and chicken piccata, Angelina's easily has their bases



Linguine Frutte De Mar



Seafood Fra Diavolo



Chicken Piccata

seafood make strange bedfellows, sautéed shrimp and scallops come together in a creamy Alfredo sauce over freshly made ravioli stuffed with ricotta cheese.

Regardless of what's on order, one thing remains the same: their dedication to detail and delivering on quality. So too, is their desire for each guest to feel that they're receiving a warm welcome in a place that treats them like family paramount. "When you treat people as if they're in

your home and create a welcoming environment, that makes them want to come back," Brian maintains. And with nearly 25 years of success, it's obvious that their recipe is definitely one that's served them well.

covered...and smothered...in robust sauces and rich, creamy cheese. For the seafood lover, the Linguine Frutte De Mar is sure to satisfy: loaded with plump shrimp, tender scallops, and meaty clams in a white wine reduction fortified with the flavors of garlic, chopped parsley, crushed red pepper, and just a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Handily disproving the rule that cheese and

Angelina's Pizzeria & Pasta is located at 4005 East County Highway 30A, Seagrove Beach, Florida 32459. Open Sunday-Thursday 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m., and Friday- Saturday 11:00 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. For more information, call (850) 231-2500 or visit www.angelinas30a.com.

Casting Their Spells

Rick and Christy Spell Work Magic on 30-A

BY SARAH MURPHY ROBERTSON



Summer Berry Salad –
Georges 2016 menu



Lamb Lollipops
with Rosemary
– La Crema



Christy Spell



For as long as she can remember, Christy Spell has always wanted to own restaurants. She thinks it comes both from her interest in learning the ins and outs of a new industry as well as the satisfaction that comes from feeding and entertaining people. “It’s also very special for me to share these restaurants with my father,” Christy reflects. “We are both accountants and we think similarly, but this has bonded us in a new way.”



Serrano Wrapped Figs –
La Crema



Honey Goat Cheese
Stuffed Piquillos – La Crema

With heads for business but hearts focused on family, father and daughter restaurateurs, Rick and Christy Spell are happily working their magic on their beloved 30-A businesses.

The Spell Restaurant Group began more than a decade ago in 2004 with their acquisition of Brookhaven Pub & Grill in Memphis, Tennessee. In January 2015, Rick and Christy purchased George’s in Alys Beach and La Cocina Mexican Grill and Bar in Seacrest. They next acquired Saltwater Grill in Panama City Beach in April of 2016, and La Crema Tapas & Chocolate in Rosemary Beach in August of that year.

Each spot has its own unique identity and fare, but the Spells work hard to make sure each maintains the highest level of service. This means they carefully read online reviews, dig deeper into any issue raised, and really take their guests’ feedback to heart. Meaningful dialogues with their staff lead to key learning, and even small improvements are important to them.

While the Spell Group’s restaurants are well known for the delicious meals they consistently provide, it is the behind-the-scenes work that often fuels this well-oiled machine. Excellent customer service is always their number one priority. Christy explains, “We always do our best to say yes to our guests.”

Rick and Christy have infused new energy into each restaurant, including renovations for each. George’s is now complete and boasts a gorgeous second story deck with spectacular water views, and La Crema is undergoing

La Cocina recently finished their interior refresh this spring with a new color palette, contemporary Southwestern touches, artwork from Mexican artisans, and beautiful tile work.

an expansion that will include lots more seating and a brand new front bar. At the end of the year, La Crema will expand their kitchen too. Saltwater Grill is slated to see indoor and outdoor improvements next.

La Cocina recently finished their interior refresh this spring; complete with a new color palette, contemporary Southwestern touches, artwork from Mexican artisans, and beautiful tile work. The result is a sleek, modern feel and the space looks completely brand new.

Diners will find La Cocina’s menu is still full of flavorful and authentic Mexican dishes. Many of their most popular include the fresh seafood our coastal area is known for. Some favorites include their Seacrest Ceviche made with shrimp, red onion, cilantro, jalapeno, and lime. This bright and balanced appetizer is served chilled and is a great starter to your meal. Another popular dish is their Fish Tacos made with market fresh fish like Red Snapper and served with a cooling fruit salsa.

The Spells have simply fallen in love with the 30-A area and are excited about their newest venture: a newly opened breakfast concept, Grits & Grind. Open daily from 7-11 a.m. in Seacrest, Grits & Grinds uses the La Cocina kitchen and serves up comforting crave-worthy American style breakfast favorites in the western end of the dining space. Get yourself over to try their gourmet omelets - the word is out how delicious these takes on the classic morning dish are!

Recognizing the role a successful team plays, the Spells emphasize a positive and familial work environment. “We truly enjoy watching our staff learn and evolve and have watched some kids start out as bussers as teenagers and eventually grow into management roles,” Christy happily reflects. In fact, their Sous Chef from George’s, Erik Kellison, is managing the kitchen at Grits & Grind. His creativity and enthusiasm is informing the menu of this new endeavor.

As 30-A grows, the Spells are always on the lookout for more investments and added opportunities. Christy laughs that both she and her dad are workaholics and are ever ready for new challenges and projects that may come their way. Rick and Christy’s close relationship is evident. “After all these years I am still learning from him,” Christy shares. With a formula for cultivating great staff while providing some of the best dining on 30-A, seems these two are just getting started.

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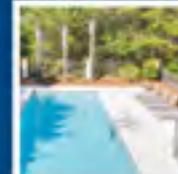
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The Red Bar

BY KEMPTEN TAYLOR

Funky is as funky does down at the Red Bar & Piccolo's Restaurant in Grayton Beach, Florida. The popular restaurant and bar serves all day and all night; but most importantly, it always serves up a good time. With live music, a full service bar, and eclectic decor that gives the restaurant a laid back vibe, Red Bar is busy all year round.

Belgian-born Oliver Petit launched Red Bar in January of 1995 where he experienced immediate success. South Walton attracts visitors with its reputation of great food and drink, but Petit often attributes his personal success to one simple explanation: being in the right place at the right time. Red Bar welcomes all. From a bar that serves anywhere from bottom of the barrel to top shelf liquor, and a menu that cooks up quick bar bites to fine cuisine, there is a little something for everyone.

Just like everything else the Red Bar has to offer, the delicious bites are not to be overlooked. With fresh ingredients at a great value, the classic dishes never disappoint. The menu changes daily; but don't worry, you'll find the menu of the day listed out on chalkboards throughout the restaurant. And no matter what the day, you can always count on the kitchen to whip up some seriously good Jumbo Crab Cakes, and if you're a little seasick, no problem. Another crowd favorite is the Penne Chicken with mashed potatoes. For Red Bar's earlier visitors, you won't want to miss out on the Eggs Benedict paired with their famous Bloody Mary or a refreshing mimosa before you hit the beach.

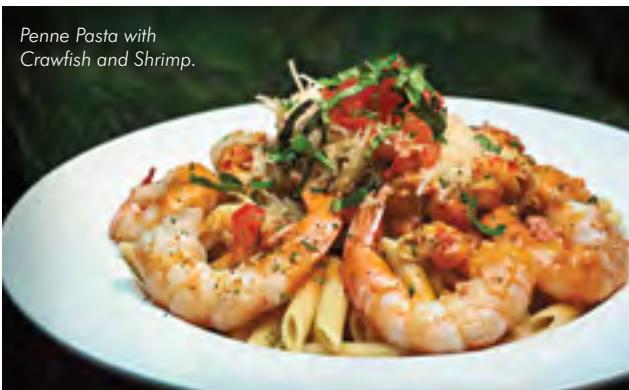
Once the dinner crowd dies down, a new crowd shuffles in. One of Red Bar's main attractions is the Red Bar Jazz Band, featuring the legendary John 'Jabo' Starks, a funk and blues drummer best known for playing with James Brown. The band plays Tuesday through Saturday

starting at 6pm, but don't leave too early. As the night carries on, the jazz gets a little funkier along with the crowd. Whether you're with old friends or making new ones, you can count on Red Bar to provide you with an experience you'll never forget. You might even see the occasional celebrity.

good time, a new experience, and a night you will never want to forget (or may not remember)! Red Bar creates a New Orleans or Memphis feel, bringing a whole new vibe to the SoWal and plays at a level many other bars in the area strive to live up to.



Pan Seared Chicken with Capers and Mashed Potatoes.



Penne Pasta with Crawfish and Shrimp.



Whether you're with old friends or making new ones, you can count on Red Bar to provide you with an experience you'll never forget.

Petit was certainly not wrong about being in the right place at the right time and nearly twenty years later, there's always a line out the door. Whether you're there for a quick bite to eat, a few drinks, or to get down with the infamous John 'Jabo' Starks, Red Bar always offers a

The Red Bar & Piccolo's Restaurant is located at 70 Hotz Avenue, Grayton Beach, Florida 32459. They are open seven days a week for lunch from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. and dinner from 5 p.m. - 10 p.m. The bar is open from 11 a.m. - 11 p.m. (until midnight on Friday and Saturday. Phone (850) 231-1008 for more information, or visit their website at <http://theredbar.com>. Credit cards and reservations not accepted. Cash only.

Wild Olives

BY KEMPTEN TAYLOR



Handcut Ribeye



Select Wines

My passion is great food and small cult wines and I think we do a good job of that.

A passion for delicious wines and food is evident when you walk through the doors of Wild Olives. Located in Rosemary for over 12 years now, this “wine, cheese, bistro” has evolved into a unique wine shop with a full bistro menu.

The wines are a passion for owner Chris Trovas and Wild Olives has become known as “the best little wine shop along 30-A”. Chris handpicks all the wines, and many are small production and cult wines that are hard to find. All selections are tasted before bringing them into the shop and he promises customers will not be disappointed with anything he might suggest to enjoy tableside or to take home. (There is no corkage fee.)

In addition, Wild Olives has a bistro menu, with small plates, cheese boards, sandwiches, and dinner entrees. Chris is constantly changing his menus with new items to keep trends updated and the customers happy. He does have a few items that have been on his menu for several years that he just can’t let go. The Reuben Dagwood – (named from the “Blondie Comics” from many years ago) - is a triple decker Reuben sandwich that has been a favorite and will stay forever... as long as the customers demand it! Another popular item is his Roasted Corn and Shrimp Chowder, which he was making well before opening Wild Olives.

Dinner at Wild Olives is served after 5pm and Chris’s flare with fresh seafood dishes and his love of steak makes it difficult to choose. If you are not having seafood that evening, he suggests the bone-in Ribeye, a favorite of many.

There are many items on Wild Olives’ menu to appease different appetites. Chris confesses that probably the favorite items on the menu are the Small Plates and



Cheese Boards. The Cheese Board offers a selection of beautiful cheeses that are presented with dried fruit, nuts, and of course olives and lots of bread. The Small Plates are very popular as well. Chris sees the growing trend that customers enjoy several “small food portions” that can be shared with family and friends. The Fried Green Tomatoes with Crab, The Moroccan Seared Scallops, and the Crab Cakes with a Red Pepper Aioli are a few from their menu and are always a popular choice when guests want to share.

What makes Wild Olives stand out is their beautiful wines that can be paired with great food and Chris’ knowledge in suggesting the perfect wine. As his wife, Ivy, acknowledges, their Wines by the Glass menu (38 choices) allows customers the options to sample wine with their food and find something new that they love!! Every



day is Happy Hour at Wild Olives - from 11am-5pm a Quartino portion of wine is offered at the price of a glass along with a discount on Beer selections.

You can’t miss Fridays at Wild Olives—they have Wine Tasting from 4 – 6pm. where you can taste 5 wines for \$25 that Chris has selected (white and red varieties) – while enjoying a sampling of their cheeses. Come early to get a good seat and enjoy live music as well.

The bottom line for this restaurant/wine shop is that the owners enjoy what they do. They enjoy their customers and the opportunity to share a new experience with pairing food and wine.

Call (850) 231-0065 or visit them on the web. The business is located at 104 North Barrett Square in Rosemary Beach. For more information, go to www.wildolivesmarket.info or www.30awines.com.

Cocktails on the Coast

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT



The new Beach Bar serves up Bud & Alley's award-winning cocktails.



Conveniently located at the end of Bud & Alley's new boardwalk on Seaside's sugar-white sandy beaches.



Serving up refreshing cocktails, beer and wine with a friendly smile.

Photos by Alissa Aryn Photography

There's nothing that goes together more than a refreshing drink and the sun-dappled waves rolling in and out with the pull of the tide – but until recently, those two things weren't quite so possible to bring together out on the sands of 30-A. Sure, you could order your beachy beverage and look out longingly over the sparkling sand from your perch at a restaurant table, but sipping that cool cocktail and sinking your toes into the sand was a no-go; until Bud & Alley's founder and owner Dave Raushkolb was finally able to realize his long-awaited dream of creating a beach bar right on the sands behind his beautiful restaurant in Seaside.

Building on his already successful brand, Raushkolb dove right into setting up shop with a small bar area and some umbrellas, positioning them at the foot of his recently completed beach walkover – an asset that truly does more than just adding ease to a beachgoer's sojourn to the sand. “The new point of access connects everyone to the restaurant's copper-topped dining gazebo, where they can enjoy our fantastic food and drinks with that wonderful view, and now it also leads right there to our brand new bar area,” Raushkolb explains.

The current setup is merely the beginning of a coming “enhancement” project Raushkolb is kicking off with some very talented designers and architects who share his vision and are part of the task force for a

number of other changes being planned for the south side of Seaside. For Bud & Alley's, the changes include tearing down the service buildings that are part of the restaurant's holdings along the road and replacing them with one large structure to house both Taco Bar and Pizza Bar, and expanding the already-popular roof deck over Bud & Alley's main building. Equally exciting, in Raushkolb's estimation, is the beach bar now claiming its place on the sand.

Upon completion of the expansion project, the new access will run directly from Scenic 30A just past the new Taco Bar and lead down to the beach. “To have Seaside's newest beach access run through our property from the roadside to the beach is just awesome, and I'm thrilled to have the walkover and the bar finally in place and open,” says Raushkolb. “I've been waiting for a long time for all of this and to have the opportunity to bring people something that's really just an even better way to enjoy paradise has been a truly special project for me.”

Raushkolb launched his concept with a temporary bar that will eventually be replaced by a permanent structure. Bud & Alley's Beach Bar guests are able to order “beach versions” selections of artfully created craft beach cocktails, frozen drinks, craft beers, wine, and some tasty food made by the talented chefs at Bud & Alley's. “It's a tremendous convenience for people who are going to the

beach or may already be out on the beach, because they're now able to have an informal lunch or a drink right there, without even having to shake the sand off their feet to get served,” Raushkolb explains. “There's nothing better than that – having cocktails at your fingertips in such a beautiful setting, and our guests are absolutely loving it.”

And what's not to love? Cocktails, including the Lemon Thyme Lemonade, the Rum Runner, and the Dragonfly join a menu of refreshing drinks like Bud & Alley's award-winning Bloody Mary. Raushkolb says, “People crave drinks that are light and refreshing and fruity when they're at the beach, so we created a menu that really speaks to that.”

So, too, does the food that restaurant runners take out to bar guests looking for a little more sustenance than a simple sip. The selection of small beach bites and limited menu currently in place will be expanded next year to include offerings not only from the kitchen at Bud & Alley's, but from Taco Bar and Pizza Bar, as well. “It's a great way to service new guests and bring people something different,” Raushkolb says. “We're offering something that no one else does, and we're maintaining the excellence and level of standard that our brand is known for.”

“My team and I are always looking for ways to enhance and improve the Bud & Alley's experience,” says Raushkolb. “This concept fits that vision perfectly, and to have the first beach bar on 30-A is very exciting.”

It's exciting indeed – and that's definitely worth drinking to.

Bud & Alley's Beach Bar is located at 2236 County Road 30A, Seaside, Florida 32459. Open daily 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., determined seasonally. For more information, call (850) 321-5900 or visit budandalleys.com

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Great Southern Café

BY SUSAN BENTON

Just like the founding of the new urbanism community of Seaside in 1981, 83 Central Square has also evolved through the years and accommodated many an eatery; but nothing quite took hold in the space until Great Southern Café moved in more than a decade ago. Located in the heart of Seaside, Chef Jim Shirley has created a proverbial living room at the town's center, where locals and visitors of all ages can gather from sunup to sundown to savor the food and drink; and take in the lively conversations, sights, and sounds.

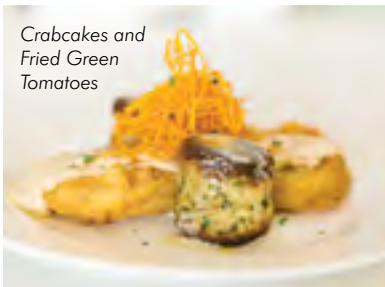
Patrons have the option of making their way through the small maze of cozy rooms to be seated inside the former cottage turned restaurant, or can choose to dine at one of the tables on the extended covered wooden porch outside. Seating at the exterior bar is coveted; especially on a beautiful day when people watching is at its peak, or the big game is playing on one of the televisions.

Breakfast begins at 8:00 a.m. with the standard choices like biscuits and house-made sausage gravy, or the veggie frittata; but reach to include Shirley's signature creations like the famed Grits a ya ya; a sauté of Applewood-smoked bacon, Portobello mushrooms, and spinach served over smoked Gouda cheese grits, topped with spiced shrimp, and sweet potato hay. If thinking brunch, plan to sip on a mimosa and order pillowy powdered sugarcoated beignets, Fried Green Tomato Benedict, or the Eggs Sardou Benedict with creamy collards and artichoke sauce served with smoked Gouda grits.

The lunch and dinner menus are similar at Great Southern Café and filled with choices like New Orleans style gumbo, panko-crusted Ginger Chicken, slow-roasted beef Grillades and Grits, a variety of fresh salads, or the catch of the day that can be pecan crusted, blackened, or grilled.

If looking for a burger, Great Southern Café has one of the tastiest that is grass fed and ground fresh daily before being cooked to perfection. I like mine blackened and topped with blue cheese and Applewood-smoked bacon.

Another favorite of mine comes from the "Starts" option on the menu. The Soul Rolls are an inspired fusion of flavors created from chef Shirley's world travels growing up as the son of a Naval pilot. Chicken and collard greens come together before being bound by a crisp wrap that can then be dipped into the house made peach chutney and Creole mustard horseradish. The West Indies crab martini is also popular and can be located under the "Quick Bites" section. Customers rave about the large chilled martini glass refreshingly filled to the rim with succulent jumbo lump crabmeat, quartered cherry tomatoes, and sliced avocado.



Crabcakes and Fried Green Tomatoes



Sandwich with Sweet Potato Fries



Collard and Artichoke Dip



Balsamic Salmon



Great Southern Wares



Grouper Sandwich with Okra

With an emphasis on Southern coastal cuisine and seafood, oysters are at the forefront of edibles at Great Southern Café and can be enjoyed fried with two sides, raw, baked three ways, and of course fried and nestled on a po-boy sandwich that comes dressed with romaine lettuce, tomato, red onion, and roasted-corn tartar sauce.

Along with the daily specials and a kid's menu, the restaurant offers happy hour from 4-6pm with discounted raw oysters and cocktails. Having known Jim Shirley for close to two decades, I can attest to his knowledge of wine, and the varied list at Great Southern Café being one of the best you will find in Seaside.

Don't skip out on the desserts, especially the tangy Key Lime pie or decadent cheesecake with praline and pecan drizzle.

Great Southern Café is located at 83 Central Square in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, 32459. They are open daily for breakfast from 8-10:45 a.m., lunch from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., dinner from 4 p.m. to at least 9:30 p.m., and they do not accept reservations. Visit their website at www.thegreatsoutherncafe.com to view the full menus and for more information, or call (850) 231-7327.

Susan Benton is a food and travel writer with published articles, recipes, and photography in many local, regional and national publications. Her website is 30AEATS.com where she writes about the secrets of Gulf Coast food.

Havana Beach Bar and Grill at the Pearl Hotel

BY NEVILLE CARSON

The designation “Bar and Grill” might belie the true nature of the Havana Beach Bar and Grill at The Pearl Hotel in Rosemary Beach. Yes, there’s a bar there – a beautiful affair of ornate, hand-carved mahogany and leather stools – and yes, of course they have a grill, but if you come here expecting an ordinary beer-and-burger experience, you’ll be surprised, because you’ll be walking into an AAA Four-Diamond restaurant with sophisticated cuisine and an exemplary staff.

My family and I sat on a pillow-laden bench at a farmhouse-style plank table that commanded a view of the rest of the restaurant. Behind us, a large portrait of a young Cuban man in one of the old cars common in the island nation put us in mind of Havana, while at the other end of the room, films of Cuban life were playing, heightening the theme of the space, which is inspired by Ernest Hemmingway’s favorite bar in Havana, El Floridita. The soft lighting and traditional Cuban Guayabera-style shirts worn by the waiters added to the semi-tropical ambiance.

Our waiter – an outstanding culinary tour guide – was Price McIntosh, a man with a clear passion for fine dining and great service that showed from the moment he introduced himself and asked us about any food restrictions we might have. Price also took the time to tell us about the NORDAQ Fresh water filtration system the restaurant uses to provide super-pure table water that is excellent for cleansing the palate. With such a considerate server and a Chef’s staff that cares even about the water, I knew this experience would be one to remember.

Speaking of the Chef’s staff, the expert in the back of the house is Executive Chef James T. Neale II. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY, Chef James worked in New York City for six years in some of the nation’s top kitchens, including Gramercy Tavern, Boulud Sud, Betony, and The Modern. Then, after a stint as Chef de Cuisine at Rathbun’s in Atlanta, he came further south (and closer to home for the Destin native), to work his wonders at Havana Beach.

Chef creates his food with the help of local farmers and a handpicked staff. A firm believer in farm-to-table cuisine, he has gotten to know many area farmers so he can get the best ingredients. Chef actually walks fields in the area to forage wild-growing fresh ingredients.



Grilled Octopus



He is equally passionate about his people. “I’m very proud of our staff,” he says. “Every one of them works hard, loves creating great food, and has a hunger to do their best. Many of our specials are suggested by staff members. We’re always exchanging ideas back and forth – it’s kind of a culinary ping pong.”

The commitment of all the staff to extraordinary dining is evident in the food. I started my meal with a Smoked Old-Fashioned. This drink is created by setting a piece of fragrant wood ablaze, extinguishing the flame, and overturning the glass onto the smoke. The delicious smoke flavor is retained from first sip to last, and brings out the taste of the bourbon.

My appetizer, Roasted Oysters, was next. These firm, cold-water fellows, topped with slices of watermelon horseradish, had the familiar “oyster” flavor tamed by their time in the oven. I also treated myself to Grilled Octopus, a dish with a smoky, mild flavor and an amazing almond paste accompaniment and Mac Farms arugula.

I opted for the Waygu Shortrib Steak entrée. The Waygu cattle that provide the meat are fed on grass, peanut shells and other products to ensure the most flavorful cut. The result has three times the marbling of ordinary beef. It didn’t fall apart like a short rib, but had the texture of a steak. The flavor was incredibly



Waygu Shortrib Steak

rich, more than any beef I have ever tasted. My teenage son happily dug into his lobster rotini, while my wife thoroughly enjoyed her perfectly prepared lamb. We all shared a mouth-watering selection of desserts, including the beautifully presented Bonfire S’mores, which exude a puff of smoke when presented, reminiscent of beach bonfires.

Toward the end of my meal, the caring service at Havana Beach demonstrated itself again. I saw a little girl who had fallen asleep lying down in her booth, opposite her parents. Without any prompting, a waiter brought a spare tablecloth, laid it over her, and carefully tucked her in. Rest assured that if you visit this establishment, they’ll take just as good care of you.

There’s a lot to enjoy at this “bar and grill”: terrific service, great food, and an atmosphere that just won’t quit. Don’t miss it.

Havana Beach is located in The Pearl Hotel at 63 Main Street, Rosemary Beach, FL. Reservations are a good idea; call (850)- 88-2882. For more information, surf to www.thepearlrb.com.

Big Bad Breakfast is All Day

BY SARAH MURPHY ROBERTSON

Big Bad Breakfast, in Inlet Beach, is bigger, badder, and way more than your average breakfast spot. But from their name alone, you may not realize they offer breakfast and lunch creations all day long as well as boasting a full bar and a great wine list. With something for every taste bud and drinks to wet any whistle, this adorable space adjacent to The Pointe is serving up freshly prepared food done the right way.

Opened on the eastern end of 30-A June 2017, this is the third location conceived by James Beard award-winning chef John Currence. He opened the first Big Bad Breakfast in Oxford, Mississippi with the resolve to give reverence and respect to the most important meal of the day. As GM Meighan Morris shares, the Inlet Beach location has taken Currence's philosophy and added nods to the beloved cuisine of this area with fresh seafood. It has also kept the commitment to serving custom-created meats, freshly made fruit preserves, and biscuits baked daily from scratch.

Starting at 7 am every day, all the favorites of the most important meal of the day are at the ready. The inviting and bright space and has combined indoor and outdoor seating for 130 and poolside service to guests of The Pointe.

The "Redneck" Benny is an open-faced benedict dish built with biscuits, country ham, eggs, and your choice of a traditional Hollandaise sauce; or going the distance and ordering the sausage gravy. I think you know what's the right call here.

Like mentioned earlier, many dishes include fresh gulf seafood. One favorite is their Oyster Scramble. This dish starts with smoky bacon, onions, tomatoes, and roasted peppers folded into fluffy scrambled eggs, and then topped with golden cornmeal encrusted Gulf oysters. Since no detail is overlooked at Big Bad Breakfast, Morris divulges even their cornmeal is a fresh, course ground, thus adding the perfect crunch.

The Fatback Meat Project is their own meat processing operation in North Alabama. All the restaurant's meats are



Inlet Beach Location



Mimosa



Avocado Toast



"Redneck" Benny



Big Bad Burger



Fried Oyster Scramble



handmade and cured in the company's development kitchens. This ensures quality control and a keen attention to the spice mixes and ingredients in all their proteins.

Speaking of meats, let's talk about the Big Bad Burger. This guy is a mile high and made with a half pound of fresh ground chuck. Its texture is tender, fall-apart heaven sent, and it comes dressed with American cheese, lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, and their tangy "Comeback Sauce". You may find yourself needing this burger even if it is 8 am.

Since many guests of the Inlet Beach location are visitors on well-earned vacations, their famous made-from-scratch Bloody Marys and Irish coffee (inspired by the original recipe from San Francisco's Buena Vista Cafe) are must orders. Big Bad Breakfast has a full bar and every drink starts with housemade mixers and freshly squeezed juices. As they say: when on 30-A!

Sweet teeth can order Belgium waffles, stacks of buttermilk pancakes, and will most certainly sing the praises of their French toast. It is brandy-spiked and then bruleed, adding that characteristic sugary shell.

Leaner plates, like their Avocado Toast, are a yummy alternative when looking for a healthier option. Nutty, toasty wheatberry bread is spread with creamy avocado, sprinkled with peppery arugula, and then two perfectly poached eggs and housemade pico as the crowning jewels. Insider tip: get this dish with lump jumbo crab, taking toast to a whole new level.

Keeping with their something for everyone, their Kids' menu has a sampling of breakfast treats like pancakes and eggs, tot faves like grilled cheese and chicken fingers, and even a pint-sized shrimp plate.

Morris hopes to add live music and Happy Hour drink specials, as the young restaurant moves into their first full high season next spring, so stay tuned. She also plans to expand their catering arm, so contact them with any questions regarding that side of the business. And as for everyone else: if you name it and crave it, Big Bad Breakfast makes it.

Open daily from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., Big Bad Breakfast is located at 10711 E. Hwy 30A in Inlet Beach. Follow them on Facebook or contact them at (850)532-6952.



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Small Plates but No Short Cuts Abrazo Latin Kitchen is Spot On

BY SARAH MURPHY ROBERTSON

While we eat out for lots of reasons - convenience, celebrations, necessity - in the right setting, dining can become its own unique experience. Slowing down, sharing, and truly savoring our food has grown in popularity in the form of Spanish-influenced tapas restaurants. Enter Abrazo Latin Kitchen in Grayton Beach. This is the new concept from the Chef Owners of Borago, and this special place has all the moxy of their beloved Italian spot with its own personal sense of style. Make no mistake; the amazing meal you'll eat at Abrazo isn't about the fast-growing tapas trend. Instead, be prepared to experience food from a dedicated culinary team. They aren't cutting any corners as they daily prepare from scratch the components that build their tremendous menu.

The menu, while inspired by familiar Latin dishes and ingredients, is nothing short of exciting. Abrazo is cooking dishes that are unlike any else you can find in this area. You aren't going to get traditional presentations or fare here; and yet they skillfully spin their magic so each beautifully composed dish somehow feels homey and familiar.

Abrazo guests will enjoy delicious food while unwinding in their lovely, light-filled dining room or porch. The restaurant occupies the space that was formerly Borago, (which moved to a new location on Hwy. 331 on the Choctawhatchee Bay); and energizes this treasured space along 30-A by adding even more variety to the food scene of the area.

One should visit Abrazo with a sense of adventure. The social and interactive way of dining is perfect for couples on a romantic date or larger groups who want to try one of everything. Abrazo also welcomes families; the fresh ingredients are passed onto your little eaters with kid-friendly choices like cheese quesadillas made with house made tortillas, for example.

With the access 30-A has to fresh seafood, you've got to believe you'll find a great deal of coastal influences on



Arugula Salad



Grouper, Salmon and Tuna with Green Rice



Coconut Cake with Chocolate Ganache



Red Pozole



the menu. This isn't your fried fish basket scene though. Take the mussels: plump, perfectly cooked, and swimming in a layered wine based broth

made with tomatoes and shishito peppers. Served with housemade bread toasted into buttery crostini makes this the kind of dish you'll order at every visit.

Remember we mentioned a sense of adventure earlier? Well let's start with one word: octopus. For many, this may seem an intimidating item to try. But trust us:

the grilled octopus is a standout situation and a must-order. Chef Nick explains how the cooking process includes slowly simmering the octopus for an hour and a half and then immediately transferring it into a bath of olive oil infused with herbs and aromatics. This is where it stays, until grilled over pecan and oak wood just before serving. The result is flavorful and fork tender with just a hint of char and smoke - a truly outstanding protein.

Every day the culinary team here is going the distance. Be it infusing tequilas, making tostadas and arepas daily from scratch, or braising a pork belly for hours; Abrazo diners will quickly take note of the fresh and homemade quality found in each dish.

Every great meal calls for great sips, and the drink menu has an impressively curated wine list with many unique varietals and labels from South America and, of course, Spain. Their cocktails are inspired creations like the Blood Orange Bellini: classic fresh fruit daiquiris; or try the Pineapple Jalapeno Margarita: refreshing with the smallest kick at the end but perfectly balanced. Salud!

After a meal this delicious, take a sip of water and then get ready to place your dessert order. The talented pastry team works hard creating these beauties. Their creamy chocolate churro cheesecake sings of cinnamon and deep chocolate flavor, the cooling triple layered coconut cake is at once both rich and airy, and the crème brulée has tropical notes from roasted pineapple as well as a sweet earthy essence from blackberries.

As Abrazo embraces their first high season on 30-A, be sure to take note of regular specials: nightly Happy Hour seven days a week from 5-6 p.m., and events like tastings of premium tequila flights (complete with creative palate cleansers such as pickled watermelon rind)! This team just keeps ramping it up a notch and that's the way their guests like it.

Abrazo Latin Kitchen is located in Grayton Beach in the former Borago space at 80 East Hwy. 30A Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459. Open for dinner service nightly from 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m..

Pizza by the Sea Creativity on a Crust

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

It might be a somewhat unexpected surprise to discover that the brains behind the operation at Pizza by the Sea are not from some borough in New York or a burg in Chicago. No. Impassioned as these areas of the country might be about all things pizza and who, in fact, do reign supreme in the quest for the perfect pie; this pair of particularly passionate pizzaiolos hail from Indiana: a state more known for their command of farmland than for their domination of the dough. But rather than opening a steakhouse or barbecue, former Indiana natives Jason and Kristi Beer tapped into Kristi's Italian roots to open a pizza joint and create truly unique pizzas in their home state. They then carried that vision when they took over ownership of Pizza by the Sea in 2011—proving that when it comes to making great pies, the Hoosiers can truly slice it. The Beers have deftly given rise to an eatery known for its New York style, foldable slices of thin-crust heaven on a plate and its willingness to go outside the box when it comes to piling on the odd-ball offerings of toppings.

It takes just a glance at the menu to see that the dough is foundational in everything at this joint—save, of course for a handful of freshly made salads, pasta dishes, and an ingenious invention aptly christened “Yum Bowls”. Born of the desire to cut out a bit of the guilt from all of the pizzas the couple were consuming on a regular basis, Yum Bowls cleverly took some of the most popular pies and de-pied them by deleting the dough and transferring all of that saucy cheesiness into a bowl right along with their tumble of toppings. Madness? Perhaps, but as the Yum Bowls have seemingly developed a cult following, that madness is obviously paying off.

For those whose need for the knead are not satisfied without a fresh baked crust, however, Pizza By the Sea offers everything imaginable and even more, giving guests



Clockwise from top: WaterColor Location, Yum Bowls, Spaghetti and Meatball Pizza

the opportunity to create their own pies from scratch or order from a listing that ranges from more familiar classics to imaginatively named pizzas loaded up with toppings that might raise more than a few eyebrows. But never let it be said that this is a place to bend to convention.

Take, for example, the Spaghetti and Meatball, which basically takes a straight-up plate of scrumptious spaghetti and makes it entirely edible by swapping out the plate for dough, smothering a mother load of marinara sauce, cooked spaghetti noodles, and scratch-made meatballs in shreds of premium mozzarella and Romano cheeses, and baking it all into something mind-blowing. By far, however, the most popular—aside from the classic cheese—is the Kickin’ Chicken, which piles up the pie with basil pesto sauce, juicy cuts of tender grilled chicken, crumbled Feta cheese, bits of crisp bacon, and slices of red onion.

There are signature pizzas like the Big D BBQ that are reflective of the original owners and their Texan

roots; but the Beers have done well in their six years of ownership to take the restaurant and continue its success—so much so, in fact, that the PBTS name now claims four locations across South Walton. “We love to serve others and really enjoy working with our team and having the opportunity to watch them grow as people,” says Jason. “One of the greatest things about owning this place has been having that chance to connect with the families who live here and getting to give our visitors a great experience. We serve fresh, quality food that’s affordable, and people love the family-friendly atmosphere we’ve created.”

Family friendly, indeed, as their kid-centric menu of Very Happy Meals caters to the junior set, offering everything from pizzas topped in all the fixings of a cheeseburger to noodles served with a healthy coating of butter.

Regardless of age and no matter the craving, Pizza By the Sea is sure to have your perfect slice—

they’ve certainly proven that, when it comes to putting it on pizza dough, they’re more than willing to get a little weird.

Pizza by the Sea operates three locations, open daily 11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. Located in Seacrest at 10343 East County Hwy 30A, Panama City Beach: call (850) 534-0044. Located in Gulf Place at 95 Laura Hamilton Blvd., Santa Rosa Beach: call (850) 267-2202. Located in WaterColor at 88 Watercolor Way, Santa Rosa Beach: call (850) 231-3030. Visit their NEWEST location in Sandestin at 9375 Emerald Coast Pkwy. West, Miramar Beach, Florida 32550, opening February 2018. To learn more and view the menu, visit www.pizzabythesea.com.

Black Bear Bread Company

Baking Bliss

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

If you've ever smelled the aroma of fresh bread baking or torn into the pillowy soft interior of a crusty loaf still warm from the oven, the thought of living "by bread alone" certainly seems tempting – and easily within the realm of possibility.

It was this very love of the loaf that inspired longtime friends and seasoned restaurant industry insiders Dave Rauschkolb and Phil McDonald to partner up and start Black Bear Bread Company. They rolled out their first batches of bliss in spring 2016 at the Seaside Farmer's Market to give the locals a taste of the breads and baked goods they planned to feature at their soon-to-be-opened bakery and café.

It wasn't an idea that rose out of thin air. Quite the contrary, as the two had long been working on the idea to launch a business together but hadn't quite found the right niche. And filling niches in the market is Rauschkolb's expertise – having opened Bud & Alley's, Taco Bar, and Pizza Bar.

It was at Pizza Bar that talented chef Phil at last got to showcase his skills working directly with Rauschkolb. "Phil is a phenomenal chef, and he's done incredible things at Pizza Bar while he's been there," says Rauschkolb, who encouraged one of McDonald's unique talents to rise – literally – as one of the cornerstones of the menu at Pizza Bar: baking fresh breads and doughs for their gourmet pies.

"While I was working in New York, I worked in a restaurant where they were doing absolutely everything from fresh from scratch, right there in-house, from baking the bread everyday to breaking down and butchering their meats," McDonald says. "The baker taught me how to make fresh sourdough from a starter, using the process of fermentation for natural leavening instead of making the bread with commercial yeast, and it creates such a fantastic product. The taste is amazing," he continues.

That amazing taste certainly gave Rauschkolb and McDonald something to chew on, especially in light of the fact that nowhere in the area was there a bakery or café offering freshly baked breads, pastries, and coffees. And so their half-baked idea for creating a partnership of some kind came to life, and the pair set out to found Black Bear. The dynamic duo, however, needed to



Artisan Sourdough Bread

to the French region of Brittany, Swenterton has been baking them like mad over the past year that she's been working with McDonald and Rauschkolb, using them as a canvas for fresh fruits and nuts and anything else that inspires her creativity.

It's the perfect meeting of the minds, it seems, as the whole concept behind Black Bear is, of course, that naturally leavening sourdough. Sourdough that serves as the foundation for a full menu of items that showcase McDonald's culinary skills in their

fresh breakfast and lunch dishes as well as Swenterton's addictive pastries and breads. Complementary to that is a coffee bar featuring Stumptown Coffee Roasters from Portland and an impressive offering of "dynamically seasonal and sustainable food," McDonald says. "Every single thing on the menu at the café is going to be locally grown and sourced produce and meats from farms where we have a personal relationship with the farmers. We've been to the farms, we've seen the cows, the pigs, the chickens. We know how they're being treated and how they're being raised, and we're passing that down to the customer, making sure we're doing things that are sustainable and responsible."

Sustainable and responsible in every bite, the food from Black Bear Bread Company is something that embodies the soul of good bread – wholesome, comforting, and absolutely tasty.



Phil, Dave and Debbie



Fresh Baked Goods



Pop Up Market

become a trio in order for their plans to be successful, as McDonald's baking skills were not quite fortified enough to carry things on his own. Quite fortuitously after the baker they initially hired moved out of the area, they welcomed Debbie Swenterton to the team as the "head dough slinger", putting her hands to work kneading everything from sourdough loaves to baguettes, bagels, and something quite fancy: a buttery, layered pastry called Kouign-amman that bears similarities to a croissant, but sprinkled with sugar and salt before being baked in a muffin tin. A breadly delight common

Black Bear Bread Company is located at 26 Logan Lane, Santa Rosa Beach, Florida 32459. Open daily from 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. For more information, call (850) 588-1703 or visit www.blackbearbreadco.com.



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Grits & Grind

BY SUSAN BENTON



Smoked Salmon Benedict



The Grind House



Monte Cristo

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, or so our mothers and educators told us. I took the saying to heart at an early age, and being from the South soon grew to adore waking up to the smell of my grandmother's biscuits baking in our kitchen.

Weekend mornings in my world were filled with sausage gravy, country ham, and eggs any way we'd like; often we'd get fancy and cook something like eggs Sardou with artichoke bottoms and spinach.

Fortunately, locals and those visiting the eastern end of Highway 30A will not have to look far when seeking the same bounty of hearty breakfast options as Grits & Grind recently opened in the Villages at Seacrest Beach. Carving out a unique area for hungry patrons nestled at their sister restaurant's interior; La Cocina Mexican Grill and Bar; the entire space has been renovated floor to ceiling, creating a modern yet inviting décor. The large original painting of agave farming; brought in from the owners' personal art collection; gives color and authenticity to the new look and feel.

Eagerly accepting an invitation to the soft opening, I was fulfilled by ordering The Grind House, which arrived with the specified lightly scrambled eggs, a side of bacon, a homemade biscuit, and cheese grits that were thick, creamy, and oozing with cheddar goodness.

Huevos Rancheros is always on my radar and I was able to get a taste on the Grits & Grind menu. The kaleidoscope of flavors makes this dish one of the best breakfast options on 30-A for those wanting a taste south



Loaded Cheese Grits



Coffee

Huevos Rancheros is always on my radar and I was able to get a taste on the Grits & Grind menu. The kaleidoscope of flavors makes this dish one of the best breakfast options on 30-A.

of the border. The corn tortillas were perfectly prepared and topped with two eggs, house made ranchero sauce, sliced avocado, and feta cheese that added a nice saltiness to the dish.

Rick Spell, who owns the restaurant with his managing partner and daughter, Christy Spell, is an avid morning food connoisseur. Together they wanted to add breakfast

to their portfolio of restaurants. They acquired George's at Alys Beach and La Cocina Mexican Grill and Bar in Seacrest Beach in 2015, La Crema Tapas & Chocolate in Rosemary Beach, and Saltwater Grill in Panama City Beach in 2016; and now Grits &

Grind has found its niche in the heart of the family. "My dad's favorite meal of the day is breakfast, and we decided to serve a full menu at an affordable price. Though I permanently relocated to the area, he can't be on 30-A all of the time because of our other business ventures in Memphis, but when he is, he is ready for really good omelets, pancakes, and waffles," says Christy.

Executive Chef and General Manager, Erik Kellison, attended the American Culinary Academy in Sarasota and has close to 30 years of experience under his belt. He was also employed with George's at Alys Beach for the past six years, and came up with the menu concept for Grits & Grind. His southern roots influenced his creativity. One of his specialties is The Next Morning Benedict that delivers two eggs on a fresh biscuit with chopped sausage, tomatoes, and green onions, before being topped with gravy and house-made hollandaise. The Grits & Grind Bloody Mary is a must with this order, unless a premium screwdriver or mimosa is more your speed. Fresh squeezed juices and organic coffee are also available.

Christy says, "It was a natural fit to ask for Erik's assistance when opening Grits & Grind. He would arrive in the morning for prep at George's, and surprise the staff with breakfast. We are pleased with the feedback so far, and we are really enjoying serving our guests that first meal of their day."

Grits & Grind is located at 10343 County Hwy 30A. Hours of operation are 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. daily. For more information call (850) 231-4021 or visit their website at gritsandgrindbreakfast.com.



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A TESTIMONIAL

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We have thoroughly enjoyed the process. You have allowed us the flexibility to be engaged to the degree we wanted, and we have always felt fully informed. We have been involved in the decisions we wanted to be a part of and you took care of the ones we didn't.

You have always been accessible by phone or in person. Reporting all progress has been consistent and we always knew where we stood with our budget. Additionally, your daily visits to the site were evidenced by the fact that you were into the details.

Our project superintendent, Kenny SanAngelo, was outstanding. You attract and retain highly competent people who are as adamant about quality as you are. The subcontractors who you have worked with for years understand and deliver that same level of professionalism and pride in their work.

Most of all, we appreciate the fact that you are a "straight shooter". You have certainly earned our trust, respect and friendship.

Since we began coming to the Gulf Coast we have had a dream of our own special place by the sea. You built Falling Waters Villa and that dream is now a reality. We appreciate you!

Sincerely,
Sonnie and Jerry Hefel

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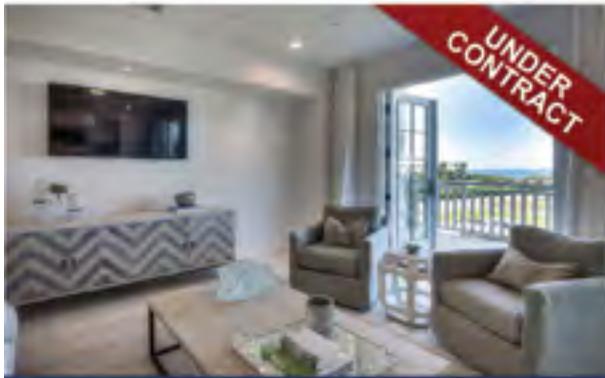


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The Emeril Coast

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

When your name is Emeril Lagasse, it's pretty much a given that anything you put your name on will BAM! Be a success... But while it could be simple to brand a concept and let things unfold, Chef Emeril takes on every new restaurant venture as a personal mission, to nurture and grow from the smallest idea beginnings to a full experience where guests can taste what makes this chef such a raging success.

One of Lagasse's newest, Emeril's Coastal Italian, is bringing diners in droves to the shiny new landmark of Lagasse located in Grand Boulevard—notably his very first restaurant in Northwest Florida. And while the simple utterance of his name could easily grant him entrée to almost any point on the map, the good chef had reason for setting up his kitchen in this beach enclave. “I love this community, and this has become primarily where my family and I live,” says Lagasse. “I want to make a difference in the dining scene in Northwest Florida, and using the fantastic resources available here—the local ingredients and the fresh seafood caught by local fishermen—as much as I possibly can gives me the ability to really make the kind of difference that I feel needs to come.”

Everything at Emeril's is naturally reflective of that desire to let freshness, seasonality, and locality drive the menu. So, too, is Lagasse's love of Italian cuisine and coastally inspired fare. As the name implies, the Italian coast is the true inspiration, and the new restaurant is his first “coastal Italian” concept thus far. Much with anything he puts his hand to, Lagasse's talent and understanding of how to let food become a thing of beauty—whether creating the simplest dish with only a few well-chosen ingredients or constructing something elegantly elaborate—shines through in every plate. Each sauce is a testament to his skill to achieve depth of flavor, with each pasta a handmade work of art. “This food is all special to me, something that's unique and different, and you can really taste the difference in the quality of the fresh ingredients we use here,” he says.

Of course, Lagasse's vision could hardly be accomplished without the proper team; and he's entrusted his kitchen to the capable hands of his Chef de Cuisine, whose own culinary talents are truly masterful. Combining their passions, the two chefs have devised a menu of traditional Italian-inspired dishes imbued with the freshness of the seafood so abundant along the Gulf Coast.



Skillet Shrimp



Emeril's Coastal Italian's Interior



Meril's Linguine & Clams



Dolce Tazzo

Photos courtesy Colleen Duffley

Offering an impressive array of small plates, fresh pasta dishes, flatbreads, and other signature dishes that bear Lagasse's creative spin, Emeril's Coastal Italian is proof that truly artful food needs neither to be over-the-top nor fussy.

Further proof is in the pudding—Chocolate Hazelnut Pudding, to be precise; or perhaps, in the cream pie? Whatever the case may be, even Emeril's decadently-devised dolce are evidentiary of the pride and care that go into every creation, delicately balanced with the desire to keep the element of fun well represented. Among the most popular of his “Dolce Tazzo” (sweet cups), is the signature Banana Cream Pie, a creamy custard confection that is the perfect marriage of sweet and tart served in

Each sauce is a testament to his skill to achieve depth of flavor, with each pasta a handmade work of art.

a parfait glass. As suggested by the menu heading, these particular delights are all served in glasses—perhaps a departure from the clean lines and tight presentation of desserts artfully arranged on a plate, but one that diners love with every bite. “We're having a lot of fun with this menu, and I think the guests are responding well,” says Lagasse.

Not that anyone would expect otherwise. Anything presented by the world-renowned chef is generally received—and tasted—with enthusiasm; but Lagasse is hardly one to bank solely on his reputation or allow ego to blind him. In fact, he takes his guests' experiences to heart, making his greatest goal to provide them with food that exceeds expectation. “Our teams are always working on how to be better every day, with all of our concepts newer or older; but having such supportive response from people with the new restaurant has been truly wonderful. Our customers seem to be happy that we're here, and

they really do appreciate what we're trying to do. For me, as a chef—and for my team—that's why we love what we do. We're just trying to make people happy and give them an unforgettable experience.”

Grand Boulevard, Miramar Beach, Florida 32550. Open Sunday - Thursday 11:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.; Friday - Saturday 11:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. For more information, call (850) 608-7040 or visit www.emerilsrestaurants.com.



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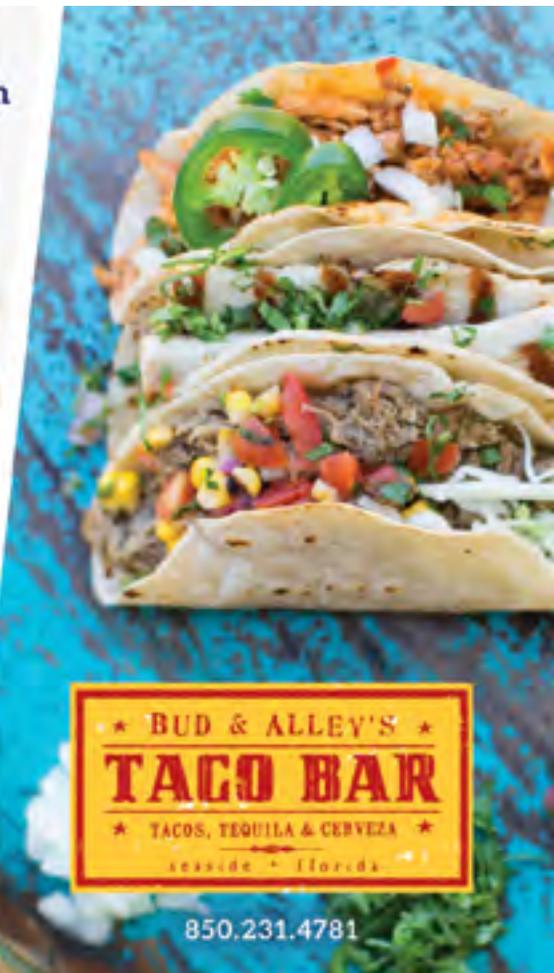
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723 Whiskey Bravo

BY NEVILLE CARSON

If you've had a big day on 30-A, or even if you haven't, 723 Whiskey Bravo is the perfect place to land and refuel with superb food, drink, and hospitality. With its beautiful rooftop bar and spacious main floor, the restaurant is almost two different places in one building, but the spaces are tied together by the values that underlie everything that goes on here: commitment, customer-oriented business practices, and teamwork.

My recent visit with wife Julie, son Nick, and his friend, Collin, began at the rooftop bar. What a place! Ensnared in my comfy wicker chair, I inhaled the salt air, felt the Gulf breeze, heard the murmur of the nearby surf and sipped my cocktail: a Whiskey Bravo, the establishment's fruity take on an Old Fashioned. Around me, the kids enjoyed virgin Pina Colodas – cold, creamy and packed with pineapple flavor – my wife sipped a Mermaid's Kiss – sweet and tangy – and we had a conversation with Skip and Victoria Moore, the owners.

for dinner. If you like sports, you can sit at the oval bar here and watch any number of games on multiple TVs or, for that campout experience, you can gather with friends in chairs around the outdoor fire pit. But the emphasis at 723 Whiskey Bravo is always on great food. So that's where we focused, sitting at one of the whimsically decorated tables, taking in the ocean-themed art and sports memorabilia, and talking with manager Heather Bothe and our server, Nichol Haynes, about the culinary treats in store. These two long-time employees are living examples of the commitment and niceness of which the Moores spoke; it shows in the way they treat people and in their great service.

With Nichol's guidance, we chose the dishes that best suit our tastes. Teens Nick and Collin chose the Fried Seafood Trio: a mountain of grouper, shrimp, and oysters on a bed of house fries. Every morsel of this dish was crisp, and the coating highlighted the flavor

If you like sports, you can sit at the oval bar here and watch any number of games on multiple TVs or, for that campout experience, you can gather with friends in chairs around the outdoor fire pit.



Gulf Shrimp and Grits



"Whiskey Bravo"



Grilled Grouper



"Mermaid's Kiss"

"When we started 723 Whiskey Bravo, we put a great deal of effort into getting the right team together," Victoria says. "If you have the right people, you're well on your way to success."

"We let people know right away what's expected of someone who's part of the Whiskey Bravo family," Skip adds. "We review our plans regularly with them and that transparency lets everyone know they matter."

"There are two basic things you have to do to be on the team," Victoria explains, "and they're pretty simple. Be nice. Be truthful. Everything else flows from that."

The Moores' secret sauce is certainly working. Most of the staff has been here four years or longer. Staff members invariably report their favorite thing about working at the restaurant is the people. "It's like a family here," is the consistent report.

Cocktails completed, we bid a fond farewell to the Moores and headed downstairs to the main dining room

of the seafood within. Julie chose the Gulf Shrimp and Grits: a circle of plump Gulf shrimp in a cream sauce of tomato, Andouille sausage, and red pepper surrounding a generous mound of hearty, flavorful cheese grits. For my part, I had the grilled local grouper: a fresh portion of fish served atop cheese grits and asparagus, graced with a lobster cream sauce. The flavors balanced perfectly.

Satisfied as our appetites were at this point, none were willing to pass up dessert. My New Orleans Bread Pudding, served with a whiskey sauce and vanilla ice cream, offered tastes of raisin and caramel; all with a superb, firm texture. Collin enjoyed the Double Chocolate Brownie. It didn't melt in your mouth; rather, it crumbled in little avalanches of goodness. Nick opted for the Key Lime Pie; this was creamy and chilly, just as it should be, with a fresh lime flavor that was sweetly tart, leaving room for the taste of the buttery graham cracker crust to come through.

The mastermind behind all this good food is Chef Mike Culverson, a guy with a huge grin who has been making magic in the kitchen since he was sixteen. His food demonstrates the Moores' value of truthfulness – the finest foods with their flavors standing on their own, highlighted, but never hidden by accompanying ingredients. That's putting sound principles to work in real life and the result is delicious.

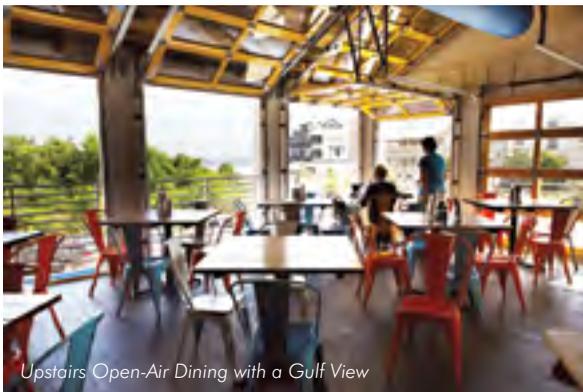
723 Whiskey Bravo is at 3031 East County Highway 30A, Seagrave Beach, FL 32459. Call 850-213-0015 or surf to www.723whiskeybravo.com.

Chiringo

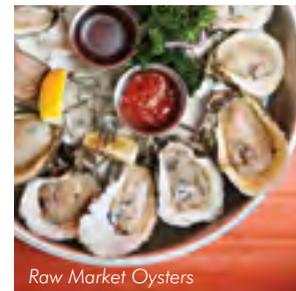
Exploring the Beaches, One Bite at a Time

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

Using a mere eight letters, Chiringo is a place that certainly capitalizes on piquing the interest through its name, claiming this unfamiliar word of Spanish origin to communicate the vision behind the restaurant and the food they put on their vibrant menu. So few letters to express such a vast array of flavors that all sing harmoniously on the plate—albeit with a definite accent. Letters that offer a clear view of what inspired the owners to partner up and create this wonderful beachside eatery, where each bite transports the palate to various coasts across the globe, dipping its toes in the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, to make a splash worth savoring.



Upstairs Open-Air Dining with a Gulf View



Raw Market Oysters

to further that beachside experience that Chiringo was designed to create.

The menu here is a fun escape to the beach: jumping off the docks to serve up something truly unexpected—though that fun is done in such a way



Chiringo Burger



Lil' Chubbys: Chiringo's signature ice cream sandwich



Chiringo is defined as “a small enterprise—usually a bar—selling mainly drinks, and tapas, sometimes meals, in a more or less provisional building, often on a beach or loose surface where a more permanent structure may be unviable”. However, the 30-A Chiringo laying claim to enviable real estate at Grayton Beach is anything but a “provisional building”. In point of fact, the restaurant offers an impressive view of the beach from its many airy windows and covered deck seating area. Fittingly to the underlying vision, the atmosphere is hardly stuffy, but rather an inviting one that lacks pretention, despite the fact that the fare is of the flavor and quality one would expect to see at a multi-starred restaurant. Little wonder, when one considers the fact that owning partners and friends Andy McKoski, Lance Jaglarski, and Travis Matney put their collective heads and hearts together to create this beachside gem of coastal cuisine; fusing together Spanish, Mexican, and Floridian fare in one place to capture their very essences and celebrate them at their finest.

“When we first opened, we were originally perceived as a restaurant strictly serving Spanish food, when the reality is that we were—and are—a restaurant inspired by Spanish beach culture,” explains McKoski. “We try to bring the energy and freshness of all excellent beach

trips to our customers through the flavor of our food and the freshness of our execution, and we’ve always thought Chiringo should be an experience.”

Bringing that vision to life on the plate is executive chef Chris Rye, whose years of expertise in creating beautiful dishes clearly display an understanding of flavor profiles and usage of spices that bring focus to the inherent nature of his ingredients—and that talent bursts forth in every bite. A variety of colorful appetizers start things off with a bang, offering such unique plates as red beet hummus; lump crab and avocado toast; and even zesty albondigas, made with grass-fed ground beef served in a rich house made tomato-rioja sauce topped with shredded manchego cheese and diced chives. Each dish is artful in its execution, offering guests a peek at coasts that the owners have visited and drawn inspiration from

that never loses sight of excellence. “When you’re using the best ingredients, that translates to the flavor you achieve, and flavor is what we’re known for bringing to the table,” McKoski says,

And that table is certainly filled with delicious dishes, offering everything from fresh salads to “handhelds”; such as fish tacos, and a po-boy-esque creation called the Chiringo Peacemaker: a loaded up brioche bun with fried oysters and shrimp, topped off with a kick of spicy remoulade, shredded romaine lettuce, sliced tomato, and their signature “awesome sauce”.

Both land and sea are loved with equal abandon here, as one can clearly see in the adventurously named Category 5 burger: a hurricane-force creation consisting of two grass-fed beef patties, divided by a patty of fried Havarti mac and cheese topped with melted pepper jack and white cheddar cheese, creamy peanut butter, mango jam, crisp bacon, arugula, sliced tomato, and sharp white onion. Grain bowls packed with Spanish style rice or quinoa bring on a more healthful approach, while baskets full of fried delights tempt one over to the dark side. From first bite to last, Chiringo is a departure from the norm, the perfect escape for the palate. And whether you’ve been to the beaches of Spain and Mexico or never ventured away from the coasts of Florida, this is one restaurant that’ll certainly satisfy your wanderlust.

Chiringo is located at 63 Hotz Ave., Grayton Beach, Florida 32459. Open daily 11:00 a.m.- 11:00 p.m. For more information, call (850) 534-4449 or visit www.chiringograyton.com.

Restaurant Paradis

BY KEMPTEN TAYLOR

Paradise isn't far when traveling to the sandy beaches and blue waters of Rosemary Beach, Florida; but Restaurant Paradis brings it just a little bit closer. Established in 2014, Paradis has become a popular hangout for both locals and tourists. With a passion for food, family, and fine dining, owners Danny and Monica Costenzi saw an opportunity to bring something a little new to the table in the charming Rosemary Beach area. Featuring locally sourced ingredients, coastal cuisine, and innovative dishes and cocktails, Paradis did just that.

From the full service lounge to the dining area and outdoor seating, Paradis welcomes all occasions. Whether you're trying to get your foot in the door for a happy hour that's never dull or enjoying a bite to eat after a day at the beach with your family, the restaurant aims to provide you with an unforgettable experience. The moment you walk into Restaurant Paradis, you are welcomed into a lounge that feels both intimate and inviting. You won't be able to resist taking a seat at the granite bar top and sipping a signature cocktail, such as the Hibiscus Paloma (Milagro silver tequila, hibiscus simple syrup, fresh citrus, grapefruit juice, club soda, lime, salted rim) carefully crafted for your enjoyment.

Restaurant Paradis has locally-loved Chef Mark Eichin at the helm to bring the Emerald Coast delectable fine dining with coastal cuisine. Make your way to the dining area where the ingredients are always fresh, seasonal, and local. His ability to take classic ingredients and create inventive coastal cuisine will have your taste buds swimming. Chef Eichin has been with Paradis from day one and his brilliant dishes bring in faithful patrons from near and far time and time again. A few house favorites include the Diver Scallops (seared with a wild mushroom & sweet pea risotto, carrot beurre

blanc), Wasabi Pea Encrusted Ahi Tuna (vegetable fried rice and tempura fried bok choy with kiwi wasabi aioli and teriyaki) and the Cast Iron Filet (seared & served with Yukon gold mash, broccolini, black truffle demi).

In case great food and delicious drinks aren't enough to draw you in, the amazing service certainly will. 90% of the Paradis staff has been with the Costenzis from

It is evident that no detail has been left behind when it comes to the full experience at Paradis. The restaurant has put a solid commitment toward the environment. They even 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.

The dining scene in Rosemary Beach has been growing exponentially throughout the years, as one restaurant after the other appears along the highway of 30A, but Restaurant Paradis is making its mark as the first four-star restaurant in the area. "30-A needs a commitment to play at the level of the major cities our guests travel from," says Costenzi of fine dining in Rosemary.

It is clear Restaurant Paradis has that commitment. In addition to regular dinner business throughout the year, Paradis welcomes wedding receptions, rehearsal dinners, and all your celebrations, both intimate and large. Throughout the year the restaurant features select wine dinners and tastings from some of California's most exclusive vintners.



Grouper and Risotto



Duck Confit Appetizer



Tortilla and Cumin Crusted Ahi Tuna

the beginning, creating a tight-knit bond akin to that of a family. They work together to bring their patrons the best service and experience they can. "We are passionate about continuing to learn together as a group," says owner, Danny Costenzi.

It's no secret that family is close to the hearts of the Costenzis. With two children of their own and a close relationship to their loyal staff, their commitment to bringing people together truly shows. From friends at the bar enjoying a night out, to families strolling in from a day on the beach, each patron is guaranteed top-notch service, full bellies, and happy hearts.

Restaurant Paradis is located at 82 South Barrett Square in Rosemary Beach, Florida 32461. They are open seven days a week in season for dinner from 5:00-10:00 p.m. Phone (850) 534-0400 for more information, or visit their website at www.restaurantparadis.com.

Pizza Bar

BY KEMPTEN TAYLOR



Pizza Margherita

If the authentic Neapolitan style pizza and house made pastas aren't enough to bring you through the doors of Pizza Bar, then the craft cocktails, beers, and naturally fermented wines certainly will.



Gulf Mahi Strips

passion fruit liqueur, cranberry and lime juice) if gin isn't your pick of poison but you're still feeling tropical.

The Pizza Bar offers specials and pizza variety every day, so come on in and have your own unique dining experience perfectly crafted for your enjoyment and your taste buds. Rauschkolb made sure he got the right guys on his team to bring Seaside the authentic Italian it had been lacking. Now Seaside would not be whole without the bustling

Pizza Bar brings a whole new taste to Seaside, Florida. With beautiful views, authentic Neapolitan style pizza, and house made pasta, Bud and Alley's Pizza Bar is a must when visiting the sandy beaches of Seaside. The now popular restaurant began in 1986 with only Italian wines. After years of perfecting genuine Neapolitan style pizza, Pizza Bar began to set itself apart from other restaurants in 30-A.

Owner Dave Rauschkolb wanted to create the perfect pizzeria with a unique menu, craft cocktails, and a dining area that would highlight arguably one of the best views in Seaside, and perhaps the only pizzeria in the region with a view. The Pizza Bar has become the gathering place for dates, meetings, rehearsal dinners, or any excuse for an extended lunch: a concept that the pizzeria prides itself on perfecting.

Authenticity was Rauschkolb's priority, even bringing in Roberts Capirucio, who is the "pied piper of genuine Naples styles pizzas Manhattan," says Rauschkolb. Capirucio ensures that Bud and Alley's Pizza Bar is

getting the job done. All dough is made from scratch and baked using a wood-fired oven. If the authenticity of true Neapolitan style pizza is just as important to you as it was to Rauschkolb, then you can't go wrong sitting down for a bite to eat at the Pizza Bar.

Chef Phil McDonald utilizes local ingredients and creates classic pizzas with a unique menu. A house favorite is the Roasted Fennel Sausage (broccolini, kalamata olives, fresh mozzarella), although every wood-fired pizza has a large following. Another crowd favorite is the Fried Brussels Sprouts (hazelnuts, pancetta, chili flakes, herbs).

If the authentic Neapolitan style pizza and house made pastas aren't enough to bring you through the doors of Pizza Bar, then the craft cocktails, beers, and naturally fermented wines certainly will. Gather your friends and join us on the outdoor terrace for one of their signature cocktails such as the Laid Back (Nolet's gin, fresh squeezed grapefruit and lime juices, agave, bitters), or sip on a Sunshine Daydream (Rum Haven coconut rum, Giffard

bar, wood-fired pizzas, and refreshing cocktails that pair perfectly with a day on the beach. "The addition of the new bar out front has been fantastic. The new bar is out front and pizza bar has come a long ways in the past year," says Rauschkolb. Locals and tourists continue to pour in for classic food and drink with a taste that sets it apart. The Pizza Bar doesn't want to keep its views provided by the Gulf of Mexico all to itself. You can even host events on the dune terrace and make it a night you and your loved ones will never forget.

Bud and Alley's Pizza Bar is located in 2236 East County Road 30-A Seaside, Florida 32459. They are open seven days a week from 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Phone (850) 231-3113 for more information or visit their website at <https://www.budandalleyspizzabar.com/>.

Raw Food Diet: Good or Bad?

BY DR. BART PRECOURT

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT EATING RAW FOODS COULD BE BAD FOR YOU? OR, IS THIS EXACTLY THE WAY WE SHOULD EAT?

LET'S CLEAR THINGS UP:

Most often people think that a raw food diet means that they must eat cold and uncooked veggies and or many this is not something that sounds exciting or appetizing. A raw food diet does not necessarily mean a vegan or vegetarian diet. You could still include eggs, fish, and even certain raw meats.

To simplify the “raw food” diet, follow these 2 key elements.

1. Thinks of raw foods as WHOLE FOODS. They can be cold, lightly sautéed, simmered, or heated, but not cooked through.
2. Cannot be processed, homogenized, pasteurized or have chemicals added. Ideally Non-GMO and Organic.

After reading these, hopefully you are thinking to yourself, “Oh... that means eating real food without killing it by overcooking it.” Easy breezy!

Yet this will rule out some of the most popular foods in our country: i.e. store-bought milk killed by means of pasteurization and homogenization, bread and cereal over-processed with all nutrients leached out.

WHY USE A RAW FOOD DIET?

This is how nature designed it. The goal of eating more raw food is to obtain nutrients in an easy-to-absorb manner that our bodies are naturally suited for.

Other benefits include the live enzymes that we receive from unprocessed foods, like veggies and even meats. These enzymes are essentially what give us our vital force. They help improve digestion, detoxification, tissue repair and growth, hormone precursors and more.

TOP 3 HUGE BENEFITS:

Eating a raw or whole food diet has countless benefits, yet these are some of the most important that I see clinically.

1. **Decrease inflammation:** Systemic inflammation that is caused by poor food choices is sadly understated. This internal inflammation is at the root of many chronic conditions in our country, like heart disease, diabetes, mental health challenges, and hormone imbalances. Everyone benefits from less internal inflammation! A diet rich in raw whole foods will help.

2. **Increase Energy:** In Chinese medicine we call this “chi”: your body’s energy. Your food should provide you with chi, not take it away. Sadly most of the foods we eat take energy away from our bodies by causing inflammation or by requiring excess enzymes to break down or detox unwanted foods.

3. **Better Digestion:** Poor digestive health is on a major incline. The root cause is processed foods, pesticides, chemicals, and drugs; which include anti-biotics, both in our food sources and prescribed.

The benefits of eating a Raw Food or Whole Food diet go far beyond these three points. Yet these alone should be enough to encourage everyone reading this article to move toward this lifestyle.

BLENDING AND JUICING:

Both blending and juicing are great ways to incorporate more raw and whole foods into your diet. Often these are the best ways to add foods, spices, and super foods that are not normally in your food regime. If you are local to 30-A, my favorite spots for these are For the Health of It in Blue Mountain and Raw and Juicy in Seaside.

CHINESE MEDICINE HEALTH TIP:

Chinese medicine dates back over 5000 years, so you can imagine that their only food choices would be true raw and whole foods and making good choices wasn’t as mentally consuming as it can be today. Yet an important and often overlooked deciding factor in making food choices that we adhere to in Chinese medicine is the TEMPERATURE of your food. Asking yourself what temperature (hot, cold, warm) your body desires is very important. Having this simple awareness can be the difference between easily digesting your food or getting bloated.

VERDICT:

Eating a Raw Food or Whole Food diet is an absolute WIN! For good health, it is a must. Clear benefits of less inflammation, more energy, improved digestion, decreased risk of heart disease and diabetes, and creating hormone balance are just the beginning. An additional surprising benefit is its effect on weight loss.

When we eliminate the “non-foods”: breads, cereals, processed foods, sugars, etc., your body will then be able to find its most natural ideal weight. For many just eating a Raw Food/Whole Food diet has been an amazing weight loss plan.

Step up and treat your body as if it was your most prized possession and begin your Raw (Whole) Food diet today!

Dr. Bart M. Precourt



Dr. Bart M. Precourt is a Holistic Doctor, chiropractor, acupuncturist and nutritional consultant. For nearly 20 years he has helped people get healthy, lose weight and create healthy sustainable lifestyles. He currently practices in Seagrave Beach, FL at Balance Health Studio, www.balance30a.com. For a consultation contact Balance Health Studio at (850) 231-9288.



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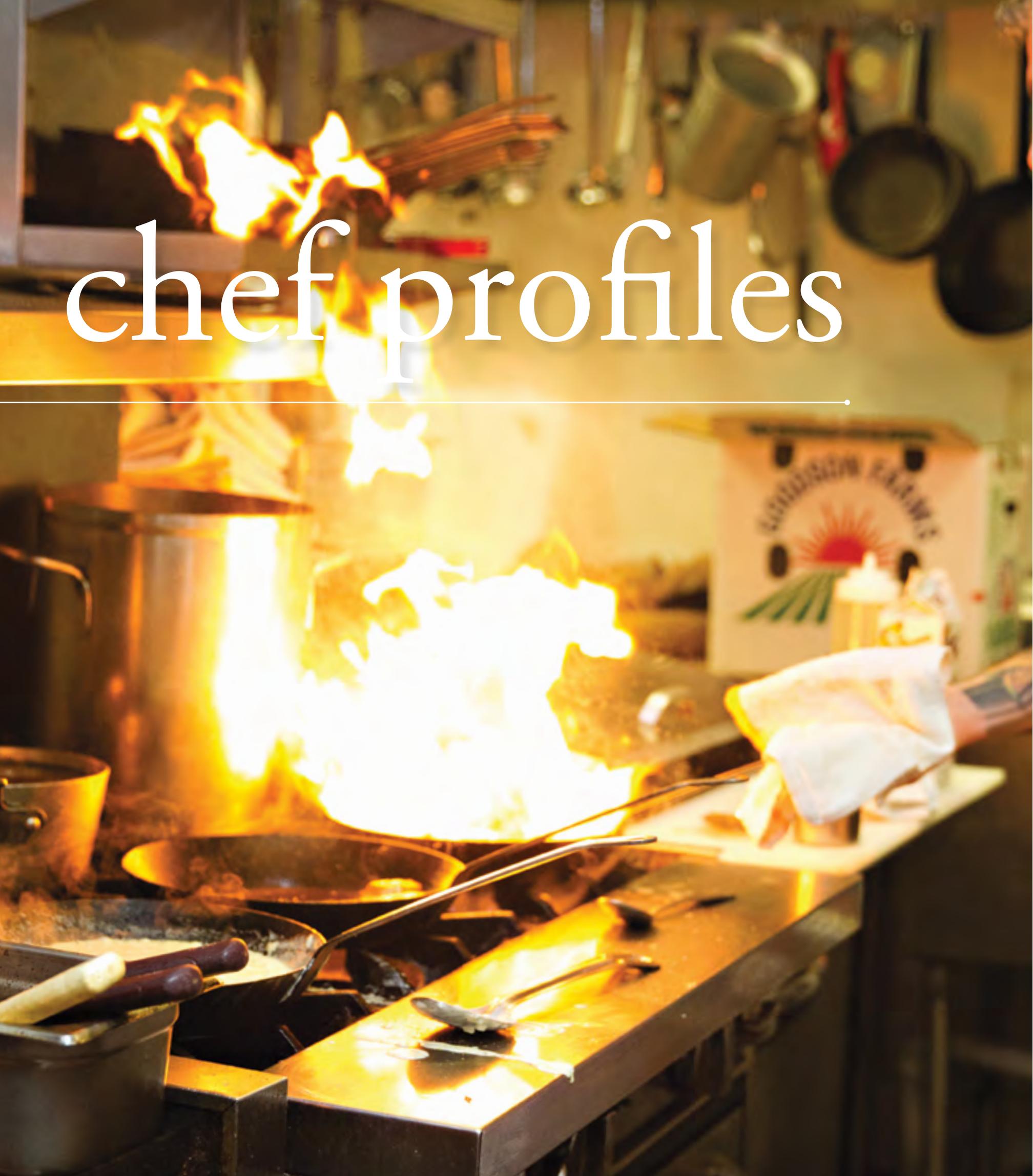
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A professional kitchen scene with a large flame on a stove. The kitchen is filled with various cooking tools, including pots, pans, and a cutting board. The lighting is warm and focused on the stove area. The text "chef profiles" is overlaid in a white serif font.

chef profiles

RESTAURANT

Chef Lock Vong of amici 30A Italian Kitchen

BY SUSAN BENTON

If looking to dine on authentic Italian dishes like nonna used to make, but with a contemporary twist, then amici 30A Italian Kitchen at 30Avenue is where you will find it. The man breathing life into the ingredient driven recipes is executive chef Manolack Vongsouvanh, aka Chef Lock, who was born in the Asian country of Laos, but raised in New Hartford, New York. Chef Lock says, “I have been an entrepreneur my entire working life and I found that I am most motivated by food, specifically Italian. I inherited a love of cooking by watching my mother and when given the opportunity to work in a restaurant, I took it.”

In 2007 Chef Lock started as a prep cook at Hotel Utica in Utica, New York and quickly climbed the ranks, becoming executive chef in 2009. “I didn’t even know what a ladle was, and suddenly I was winning food competitions and getting promoted, all while reading and researching everything I could get my hands on about food and its chemistry,” Lock recalls.

As fate would have it, by 2012 Chef Lock was hired as the executive chef of Karma Piano Bar and Restaurant in Frankfort, New York under the tutelage of Chef Tucker Rosemyer, who Lock also credits as being his mentor. Lock says, “I found my passion for Italian cuisine at Karma, and it was the best place to work. My son Brent needed to move to a warmer climate due to health reasons, and my daughter Nisaya was eager to attend school in the south, so my wife Cheryl and I decided to pack up and head to South Walton. We fell in love with the 30-A area and have not looked back!”

Chef Lock initially started his journey in Santa Rosa Beach at Crust restaurant and then opened 30A Private Chef with his wife Cheryl, providing personal chef and event catering services to rave reviews. Seacrust Pizza soon followed at Seacrest Peddlers Pavilion: a kiosk pizzeria where Lock became noticed for his Neapolitan and upside down pizzas. It garnered the attention of the Corchis family who became frequent patrons, and many conversations soon followed about opening a nearby Italian restaurant with Chef Lock at the helm.

The brainchild of the entire Corchis family; including George and Amy’s four children Jordin, Nathan, Alyssa, and Lily; amici 30A Italian Kitchen came to fruition in 2016. The name amici means friends in Italian, a concept embraced by inviting all into the 2600 square foot swanked out open restaurant space, which includes a chef exhibition kitchen that seats twenty. Chef Lock says, “This is my favorite part of the restaurant. I can get into



Executive Chef Manolack Vongsouvanh

“It is pure home style cooking with the finest ingredients. I love when our local farmers knock at the back door to sell me their seasonal produce.”

my zone and let guests sample food while I educate them on the menu offerings. It is pure home style cooking with the finest ingredients. I love when our local farmers knock at the back door to sell me their seasonal produce.”

Specializing in authentic Neapolitan pizza pies made in the famed Marsal pizza oven; well known for its crispier crust due to even heat distribution; the pasta and

authentic sauces, all house made, are also at the forefront. Make sure to order Amy’s amici 30A Meatballs; hand-rolled and slow simmered in house-made vine-ripened marinara until tender; and the Funghi Pizza topped with three types of mushrooms, fontina cheese, a farm egg, and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Other highlights include the rustic Rigatoni Bolognese and the Tagliatelle frutti di mare filled with local fresh Gulf seafood. “The restaurant is unique and inviting for those looking for a special place to dine as a couple, a family, or to meet up with friends after work. But the heart beat for me is still the exhibition kitchen and sharing it with my team,” says Chef Lock.

amici 30A Italian Restaurant is located at 30Avenue at 12805 US Hwy 98 East, Suite R 101, Inlet Beach, Florida, 32461. Hours of operation are Monday through Sunday 11:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. For more information and seasonal hours of operation, please call (850) 909-0555, or visit www.amici30a.com.

John Jacob of Vintij Wine Boutique & Bistro

BY SUSAN BENTON



Executive Chef John Jacob

in their ingredients' quality, and preparations emphasizing the food integrity, has emerged.

For almost two decades, executive chef John Jacob (JJ) has been the curator of the artistic plates developed each night at his restaurant, Miramar Beach's Vintij Wine Boutique & Bistro, which he co-owns with Todd Reber, AKA wine guru. Together they

Jacob adheres to the principles for meal preparation and presentation using only superior seasonal ingredients from places like Mac Farms in Santa Rosa Beach and from Harbor Docks in Destin.

have satisfied even the most discriminating of palates, like that of Emeril Lagasse, and were asked to participate on Emeril's Florida cooking show, highlighting the best that the sunshine state has to offer.

Jacob adheres to the principles for meal preparation and presentation using only superior seasonal ingredients from places like Mac Farms in Santa Rosa Beach and from Harbor Docks in Destin. Seafood entrées often include yellowfin tuna, tilefish, cobia, or the catch of the day; which could be an under utilized species (trash fish). Signature dishes include the Oyster BLT, Grilled Carolina Quail, and Grilled Ribeye. Reber says, "The wine list is particularly well-regarded by diners and pairs beautifully with JJ's food. There are vintages from the Napa Valley and Santa Lucia Highlands in California, Burgundy and the Rhone Valley in France, and Hawkes Bay in New Zealand, to name a few."

Hailing from Westfield, New Jersey, Jacob cut his teeth in the culinary world by working in an Italian-owned fish market while still in high school. "It was an incredible experience. Owner Mike Diana was my

mentor. He ingrained in me an affection for seafood, the proper respect and handling of it, and the importance of working with the freshest ingredients," says Jacob.

The Market sold prepared foods as well, and within two months Jacob was cooking handmade pasta dishes. He went on to Culinary School in New York, followed by jobs in Manhattan; Maine; and Seattle, where he found his affinity for salmon, something showcased often on the menu at Vintij. The colder temperatures had Jacob longing for a warmer climate, and by mid 1980s he stumbled on an article about the Emerald Coast and an up and coming restaurant, Bud and Alley's in Seaside.

Jacob made several attempts at gaining a position at the restaurant by contacting the then executive chef, Irv Miller (currently with Jackson's Steakhouse in Pensacola), and finally an offer was made for lead line cook.

Jacob eventually took over Miller's reins as executive chef at Bud and Alley's, and says, "Irv used components that were off the charts. He did stuff that I had never seen in the east." When asked what his preferred fish species was, Jacob replies, "Easy, it's flounder. I love to stuff it with shrimp, crab, and scallops, and serve it in a fish broth fumé."

Philip Benton, a patron who has been dining at the restaurant since its opening, says, "JJ's fish preparations are among the finest I have tasted and I have traveled the world. His broth-encompassed fish is my favorite preparation. On a late night flight back from Napa, where I had dined on some delicious food, I called the restaurant when I landed to make sure that they were open as I was craving JJ's cooking. That's how good it is!"

Prideful of his work and first in line to buy anything local, Jacob says, "I cook unpretentious comfort food, paying attention to every detail, and what is on my menu is what I love."

Vintij is located at 10859 Highway 98 West, Miramar Beach, Florida 32550. You can reach them by phone at (850) 650-9820 or visit their website at www.vintij.com.

As much as the wine industry has improved wines, small farming techniques have produced crops that are healthier and more flavorful, with restaurants and families choosing more often to purchase from local purveyors. This includes seafood. Arguably the best in the world is obtained from our waters. When combined with boutique farming and award-winning wines, the finest of experiences can be created. So as social media and television continues to put varied gastronomic choices in front of all who are willing to watch, a fraternity of chefs who take a special interest

Chef Profile: Chris Joyner of Saltwater Grill

BY SUSAN BENTON



Chef Chris Joyner

also serenaded nightly by Michael Rorah, making magic happen on the keys in the on site piano bar.

In the kitchen however, Chris Joyner is at the helm. Joyner was recently brought in to join the team as the executive chef of Saltwater Grill with diners already singing his accolades.

Originally from Ashford, Alabama, Joyner is a Navy veteran with submarine experience. While in the military he began thinking about his passion in life: cooking, and so attended Gulf Coast State College, where he received a degree in Culinary Management in 2002.



Crab Cakes



Seared Tuna



Shrimp and Grits

With such a rich journey through the local culinary scene as a cook, chef, and partner in many of the covered 30-A restaurants; not to mention being a Panama City resident since 1999; Joyner was the natural fit for Saltwater Grill when the Spell Restaurant Group was seeking new talent. Joyner says, “I am committed to this area and to bringing the highest quality of food to the guests at Saltwater Grill. I enjoy using Florida’s citrus as it really brightens the dishes. I source Greg Abrams for seafood, Florida Seminole for beef, and have standing orders with local farmers for produce.”

Though Saltwater Grill offers an abundance of the freshest Gulf seafood and a dazzling array of choice steaks, if in the mood you can choose your own from Maine Lobster flown in twice weekly and found in the live lobster tank. You might also be tempted to try one of the most popular dishes, the gluten free Grouper Imperial. It is perfectly grilled before being topped with succulent jumbo lump crabmeat and finished with a decadent sherry beurre blanc sauce.”

Joyner says, “I tend to lean toward Mediterranean flavors. I like the simplicity and balance, and it suits our fresh from the Gulf seafood so well. For example, most grilled fish pair perfectly with lentils. Add some fried potatoes and arugula dressed with lemon-olive oil to the plate, and you’ve got a balanced dish where the flavors shine and the protein is the star.”

In his time off, Joyner enjoys running and spending time with his wife Betty, an English professor at Gulf Coast State College.

TripAdvisor ranks Saltwater grill among the top fifteen restaurants out of close to five hundred in Panama City. With Chef Joyner’s credentials it is no surprise.

Saltwater Grill is located at 11040 Hutchinson Blvd., in Panama City. Hours of operation are Sunday to Thursday 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. and Friday to Saturday 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. Plan on taking advantage of the call ahead seating so that your table will be waiting upon arrival. Please visit their website www.saltwatergrillpcb.com for more information, or call (850) 230-2739.

His reputation grew with positions he held at WaterColor Inn & Resort, where he was later promoted to Sous Chef; and then Chef de Cuisine at the property’s Baithouse Restaurant, which was featured in *Southern Living* magazine.

Joyner, seeking his own restaurant space and wanting to be his own boss, became a partner in the popular Onano Neighborhood Café in Rosemary Beach. Known for being one of the few upscale establishments in the area at the time, Onano served coastal Italian cuisine specializing in Gulf seafood and fresh pastas.

“I tend to lean toward Mediterranean flavors. I like the simplicity and balance, and it suits our fresh from the Gulf seafood so well.”

Food and music are key elements that most are seeking when on vacation. They are also important for locals who also want the freshest coastal cuisine: a place to meet with friends, and experience the nightlife.

Saltwater Grill in Panama City Beach offers those things, along with a panoramic view of the their 25,000-gallon tropical saltwater aquarium upon entering the restaurant. Both the Café dining room and the more intimate bar area offer dazzling views of this tropical reef and its nonstop parade of exotic sea creatures. Patrons are

PRODUCE
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farmer talk



Eddie Driggers of Coastal Blue Farms

BY SUSAN BENTON

Audrey Hepburn once said, “To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.” That is the philosophy behind Coastal Blue Farms located in Freeport. Owner Eddie Driggers says, “Coastal Blue Farms is all about the food. We are a suburban sustainable farm located on eight acres just across the bridge from 30-A, and we bring the highest quality products that are grown using non-GMO and organic seeds to area restaurants, markets, and farmers’ markets.”

With over 3600 square feet of greenhouse indoor space that allows Coastal Blue Farms to produce in excess of two thousand heads of artisan leafy greens per week, nearby chefs flock to the farm in person to hand select what they want to use in their menu preparations. Chef Lock of Amici 30A Italian Kitchen at 30 Avenue in Inlet Beach is especially fond of the basil varieties and recently commented on the aroma of the Thai basil, saying, “It reminds me of home and my mother’s pho, a comforting soup. The greens that Eddie grows are so fragrant and bright.”

Because Coastal Blue Farms grows in an environmentally controlled greenhouse, it allows them to keep the bad pests out and the good pests in, like bees. Eighty percent of the indoor farm is grown using a hydroponic deep-water culture practice, along with vertical gardens; while the other twenty percent is grown using organic practices implemented by NSF certified standards.

“Because our greens are grown in a controlled environment, we avoid the use of pesticides. We strive to minimize the impact to the environment and have a zero waste process, meaning we always try to use and reuse 100% of any byproduct that comes from Coastal Blue Farms growing practices, ensuring only the safest, tastiest, and freshest produce,” says Driggers.

With so much land, Driggers has plans for expanding the exterior space to include a seasonal chefs garden and more edible flowers, micro greens, and herbs. “We grow a lot of unique lettuce varieties that chefs don’t have access to, so we fill a need. Everything you consume comes from a farm somewhere, but the words farm to table have been overused. One of the things we want known about our story is that we are community based. We eat in the restaurants that use our produce and we know the product is hyperfresh, meaning typically harvested the same day it shows up on the menu,” explains Driggers.



Eddie Driggers



Tomatoes



Hydroponic System



Basil

Eighty percent of the indoor farm is grown using a hydroponic deep-water culture practice.

Driggers was working in the tech industry for a fortune 500 company when he realized he was no longer happy. So, he began working pro bono in Texas with Sustainable Harvesters to learn farming techniques and practices to implement a large scale growing operation. “Growing up in South Alabama and even living in Texas, we always vacationed at the beach. We were ready to come home and plant some roots here, pun intended,” recalls Driggers.

Coastal Blue Farms is also passionate about educating consumers on growing techniques and will sell their products straight from their farm, something many farmers don’t like to do. Farm tours are available Tuesday through Thursday and last about an hour. The cost is \$10.00 per adult or \$25.00 for a group. Children are always free. The best part is you get to take home some goodies from the farm while gaining an appreciation of how to grow healthy food. Driggers says, “We are also gearing up to teach seasonal farming classes, along with microgreen and hydroponic gardening classes!”

Coastal Blue Farms is located at 95 Happy Hollow Drive in Freeport, Florida. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. You can purchase products directly from Coastal Blue Farms, at the Seaside Farmers Market, and at the 30A Farmers Market at Grand Boulevard. For more information, call (850) 564-3440 or visit their website, www.coastalbluefarms.com.

Cypress Cattle & Produce

BY SUSAN BENTON



Cypress Cattle & Produce Company holds a heritage of 103 years of running the family business, and the latest generation thinks that's an experience worth sharing.

"My family has raised about everything you can raise on a farm," says Luke Langford of Ponce de Leon. If his name sounds familiar, it may be because Langford has been strumming a guitar and belting out twangy country classics with The 331 South Band at large events over the past couple years, including opening the Down Home Music Fest. But as much as he enjoys entertaining, Langford's love of the simple life is what drew him back into the farm business while he was in college.

Cypress Cattle Company was founded in 1912 by W.J. Sapp. From Sapp, the farm was handed down through the family to W.L. Comander, then Ken Langford, and now Luke Langford.

"In the early years and into the Depression, we grew red potatoes by the railcar," says Langford. Sapp also distributed cornmeal and cane syrup produced on the farm and sent milk to an ice cream factory in Pensacola.

The farm had a dairy operation until 1993 when, Langford says, "It was time to get big or get out." The family got out of the dairy business and never regretted it. The farm now supplies produce to food retailers and distributors such as Walmart, Sysco, and its very own produce market in Freeport.

Things on Cypress Farm changed gears once again as popularity grew around agritourism, a type of tourism offering visitors an educational and novel look at life and business in any agricultural setting.

"I want them to spend a day out on the farm going through soybeans and to see production crops," says Langford. "I want them dirty when they go home. I want

The farm first tried on public curiosity by inviting people in to pick their own bushels of peaches from 600 trees in the orchard each spring.

them smelling like animals because they had their hands on them all day." The farm has hosted field trips and now offers farm tours of the property.

Florida lacks the frigid climate, but that didn't stop the farm from ushering in fall favorites. Cypress Cattle & Produce just ended a successful first ever season of fall-themed fun. The farm was open to the public to experience a 5-acre corn maze, giant pumpkin patch, hayrides, and children's activities. The farm first tried on public curiosity by inviting people in to pick their own bushels of peaches from 600 trees in the orchard each spring. After success with u-pick peaches and strawberries, it only made sense to try the same with a pumpkin patch.

Langford says the pumpkin patch is one of the things that sets Cypress Farm apart from other corn mazes in the region. "There's a lot of people that have moved here from places like Ohio and Indiana, and the fall family tradition was to go out into a patch and pick the pumpkin. Here, you go to a Walgreen's parking lot and grab one off a palette."

Langford staffed the corn maze with Future Farmers of America students. The teens helped visitors carry 50-pound pumpkins to their car and dressed up in zombie attire

to scare those walking through the haunted corn maze experience after dark.

Now that the corn maze is retired for the season, the family will get back to using its commercial operation to teach the younger generation about the importance of knowing where their food comes from and dispelling misconceptions about modern agriculture - even genetically modified (GM) crops.

Guests who traipsed through the corn maze probably didn't realize it was a field of genetically modified sweet corn. Cypress Farms grows crop plants whose genes are spliced with a protein that strictly wards off corn pests.

"When we grow GM corn, I am able to cut my pesticide and chemical application by about 90 percent," says Langford. "On the harvest end, we harvest 90 to 95 percent of our crop instead of 70 percent like we used to with corn ear worm damage."

Waste is something the farm strives to eliminate. When the corn maze is cut down in a couple weeks, the corn will be used to make molasses and the field will be primed for dove hunts.

Langford has two young sons he hopes will take an interest in farming like he did. "Hopefully one of them will be in a place where they want to take over the family farm," says Langford. "It was never forced on me. It's like I was hardwired for it."

Cypress Cattle & Produce is closed to the public except on specified dates. The farm's stand is located at 16564 US 331 South, Freeport, FL 32439. For more information call (850) 880-6955 or visit their website, cypresscattle.com.

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Farming Our Local Waters: Trey Nick of Nick's Seafood

BY SUSAN BENTON

As a food writer and blogger living by the water's edge of the Emerald Coast, one of the first questions people ask me when they visit our area is how they can be certain that they are buying or being served fresh seafood. It would appear that answer would be simple, but many restaurants do not serve fresh fish and shellfish.

According to Oceana, the largest international advocacy organization focused solely on ocean conservation that was founded in 2001, over 59 percent of the tuna sold in the United States was mislabeled. Tilapia lovers might want to take notice that their dinner could be farm raised on pig feces and then traveled from Vietnam or Thailand. Today, more than 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported, and less than 1 percent of that is inspected by the government for fraud.

If seeking fresh, never frozen, or mislabeled seafood straight from the Gulf of Mexico, keep up with *Gulf to Table* on Facebook and Instagram. There you will meet the farmers of our local waters; like one in particular, Trey Nick.

Frank III, aka Trey Nick, was born into his grandparents' fish camp and restaurant business that was built in the early 1900's but changed to their family's hands in 1956. Tucked between the Choctawhatchee Bay and Basin Bayou in Freeport, Frank and Hattie Nick sold bait, beer, and rented fishing boats for a dollar a day.

In 1963, Frank's Italian passion to cook for others took over and a new building was erected. Nick's slowly honed its reputation for serving only the freshest homegrown seafood and became the popular place to enjoy raw oysters tonged from their own state leased beds; plump shrimp and mullet plucked from the Gulf and bay before being dredged and fried in their secret batter; and hamburgers and ice cold beer sold for a fair price.

In 1979 Nick's Seafood Restaurant was passed on to Trey Nick's parents, Frank Jr. and Bonnie, and by 1998 Nick became the third generation to take over the reins with his wife Jennifer.

"We have always kept the tradition of a family atmosphere. My daughter might be bussing tables like last night, while my son is on oyster washing duty.



Trey Nick

Millionaires to fisherman are our continual customers. People have their favorite days to come to the restaurant and we treat customers like family too. Those that grew up eating here are now bringing their own kids. This is more than just a restaurant, it's a way of life," says Nick.

Living right off the local waters, along with the day-to-day operations of the restaurant, Trey Nick also runs

We will not buy anything overseas when you can get the best right here. It's about putting the freshest product on the plate.

three commercial inshore fishing boats and is the largest blue crab commercial harvester in the Choctawhatchee Bay with his son pulling traps by his side. Nick says, "We do our own fishing and crabbing. I sell blue crab, mullet, speckled trout, shrimp, and flounder for the most part. We will not buy anything overseas when you can get the best right here. It's about putting the freshest product on the plate."

Seafood traceability, or tracking fish from boat to plate, significantly reduces seafood fraud, while providing consumers with more information about the seafood they are purchasing.

Harbor Docks, Sexton's, and Destin Ice & Seafood in Destin; Willingham Seafood Company in Valparaiso; Bayou Bills Crab House in Santa Rosa Beach; Nick's Seafood in Blue Mountain Beach on 30-A; and Johnny's Shrimp Shack in Defuniak Springs are just a few of the businesses that buy and support Trey Nick's sustainable seafood.

Nick's Seafood Restaurant is located at 7585 State Hwy 20 West, Freeport, Florida, 32439. For more information or to reach Trey Nick call (850) 835-2222, or visit www.nicksseafoodrestaurant.com.



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Samantha Hill Farm

BY JESSICA HOLTHAUS BADOUR



Gabriel and Natalie Gray

was of special interest to Gray, with his background in conservation. “As soon as I saw Samantha Hill Farm, I fell in love with it. When I found out about the creek that ultimately feeds into the Gulf, it brought back the kid in me and I immediately wanted to explore it,” he says. “I want kids to understand that there are plenty of places to explore – but we have to cherish those places and protect them. I can teach them by showing them that the way we farm and treat our land ultimately affects the waterways around us, and could impact our drinking water and the Gulf.”

To that end, the Grays started a grassroots project “Fight to Save Our American Rivers”, designed to capture the interest of youth and adults through adventure, while sprinkling in conservation along the way. Gray travels the country speaking, teaching classes, and working to inspire students while emphasizing the importance of clean water.

His conservation trips include people from all walks of life and all ages (“Eight to 88!” he laughs). Additionally, he plans to start a new project this year called Native Waters, paddling across the Southeast exploring local waterways.

“My goal of working in conservation is to help get kids back outdoors and reconnected to nature. With my passion in water and the outdoors, it’s very cool that this creek connects Samantha Hill Farm to the Gulf of Mexico

For a boy who grew up on a farm in Monticello, Fla., life has come full circle now that he and his wife have started their own 100 acre farm in Chipley. Today, Gabriel Gray is working to live off the land and encourage others to see the importance of reconnecting to the outdoors and treating Mother Nature well.



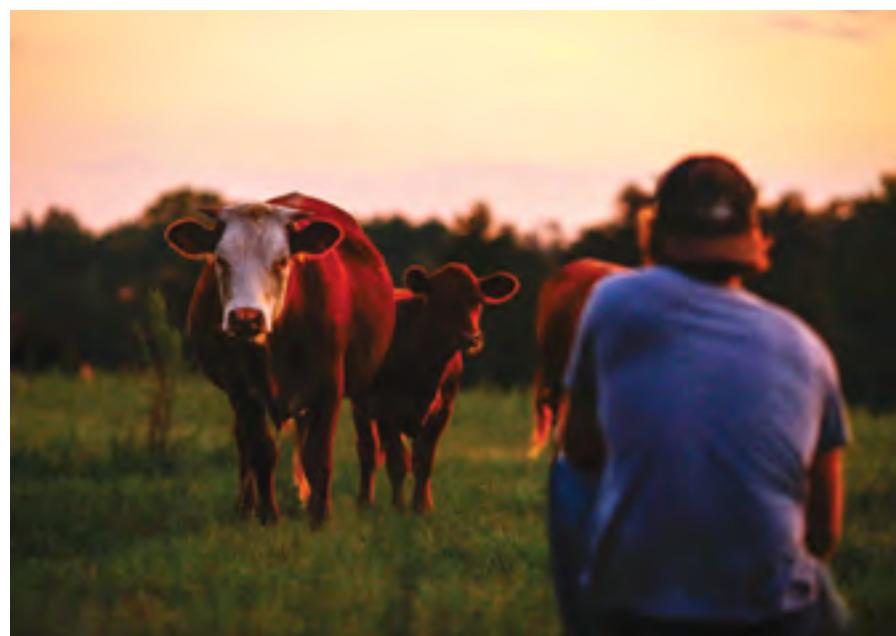
Gabriel and his dog Bindi

Gray and his wife Natalie purchased Samantha Hill Farm about a year ago, an hour north from 30-A and the Emerald Coast. He works as a firefighter/EMT for South Walton Fire District, in addition to working on the farm and running his paddleboard and conservation business, Gray Outdoors. Gray has watched the communities along 30-A grow over the past decade and, for him, getting off the beach and onto the farm brings him back to his roots.

“There are certain things that are ingrained in a person. I was lucky to grow up the way I did, with nature, outdoors, farming and animals,” he says. “Now that I am on my own farm, I’d like to raise grass-fed

beef cattle, and have a large enough garden to feed my family and friends. Growing a large enough herd to sell grass-fed beef to the restaurants here on 30-A would be my long-term goal.”

The farm just so happens to have a small creek on the back corner, which meanders its way into a larger creek that eventually meets up with the main river system that feeds into the bay that runs out to the Gulf of Mexico. This



Top: Photo by Jackson Berger
Left: Photo by John Rathwell
Above: Photo by Desiree Gardner



Left: Photo by Desiree Gardner
Top: Photo by Jackson Berger
Above: Photo by John Rathwell

out past 30-A,” he says. “This new Native Waters project will start with a six-day journey starting at the farm and ending in the Gulf.

“When I go to schools, kids come up and tell me, ‘That’s inspiring, but I don’t have a place like that near me,’ and it breaks my heart,” he continues. “I tell them, yes you do – put down your phone and go outside and listen to the birds singing and the squirrels moving through the trees. Start in your own backyard or ask your parents to take you to the nearest park. Get outside!”

Gray knows that living off the land is never easy, and running Samantha Hill Farm has definitely been a labor of love in its first year – but looking back, he wouldn’t change a thing.

“I always knew I wanted to settle back down here in the South on a farm – I didn’t know when, where, or how, but luckily my wife and I were able to work hard, save, and make our dreams come true,” he says. “Now we sit on our front porch and sometimes it’s hard for me to believe that all of this is ours. That’s what I want to show our youth: If you work hard and you love something, you can take your passion and turn it into something special.”

To learn more about Gray’s conservation trips, visit www.GrayOutdoors.com, or find him on Instagram @GrayOutdoors and Facebook. Additionally, like the farm on Facebook at www.facebook.com/samanthahillfl.

Farming Our Local Waters: Charles Morgan is Gulf To Table Certified

BY SUSAN BENTON

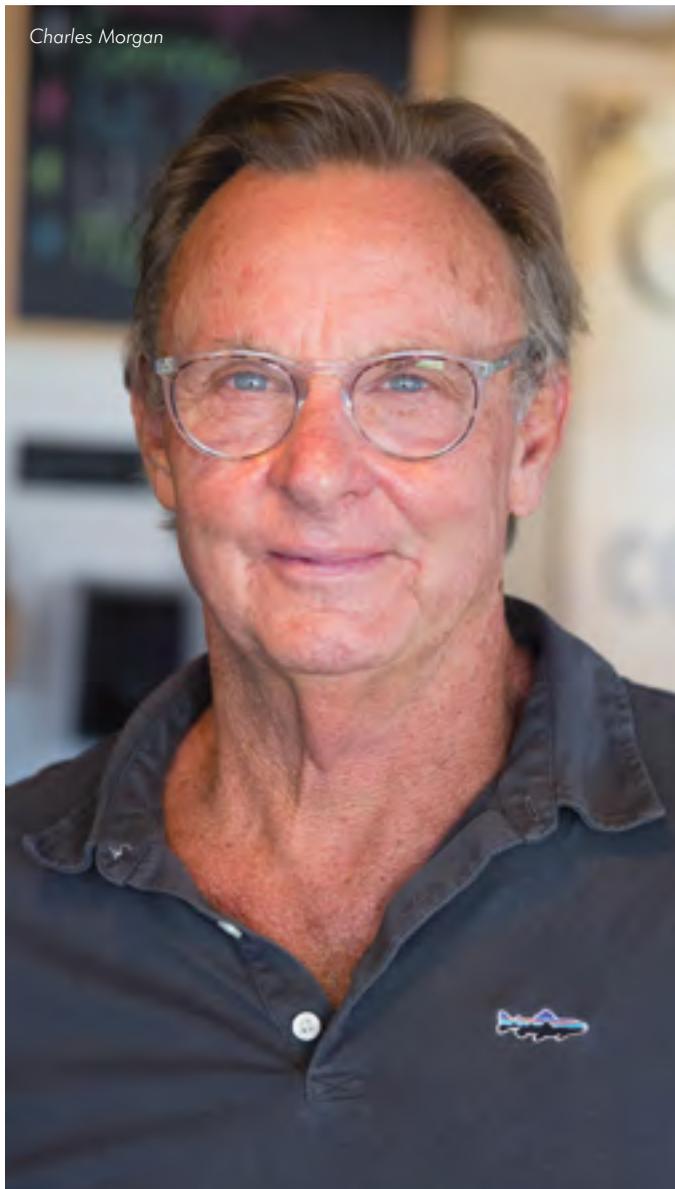
Most restaurants peppered along the Gulf Coast claim to serve fresh local seafood, but when you utter the name Harbor Docks, claim becomes fact. Owned and operated since 1979 by Charles Morgan, a former private boat captain turned successful restaurant entrepreneur, Harbor Docks Seafood emerged with humble beginnings as a place for commercial fisherman to enjoy ice-cold beer and oysters after a hard day's work.

Charles Morgan figured out early on that removing the middleman from the sale of the fish meant better accessibility to the fish and lower prices, a winning combination for expanding his Destin harbor front seafood shack on the property that his father, a prominent civil rights attorney and activist, had purchased on a whim. "Our household finances were slim. My father worked with many civil rights leaders and we were eventually forced out of Birmingham in 1963, the day after the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, when he delivered a speech critical of the state of race relations in the South. His career has been heralded in many books. We moved to Atlanta when I was in third grade and vacationed and fished in Destin. When my father came into a little money, he bought the property. I graduated from the University of Alabama and knew my passion was on the water, so I made the move," says Morgan.

After only one year in business, Morgan decided to enlarge his shanty by adding a main dining room, followed by Harbor Docks Seafood Market located in the under belly of the restaurant. "I went to a bank that would not give me a loan. I tried a second local bank and was given a check on the spot. We built everything ourselves, and created a market so that the fish could come straight off the dock into the cutting room, well before the city was incorporated," says Morgan.

The wholesale market supplies wild caught fish to Harbor Docks and Morgan's other restaurants: Camille's in Destin (named after his mother), The Local Market and La Paz in Destin (where Morgan is a partner), Dharma Blue in Pensacola, Chuck's in Tuscaloosa, Mobile, and Birmingham (named in honor of his father); along with Five Bar in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Knoxville, Mobile, Chattanooga, and Athens.

Morgan also wholesales directly to over forty area restaurants and nationally, using a brokerage called Gulf To Table, a term he and his sons trademarked and take very seriously. "We have been Gulf to Table for almost forty years. I am tired of the overuse of the term farm to table. Frank Stitt at Highlands in Birmingham has always been farm to table, long before the definition got thrown around. We want to ensure that Gulf To Table remains true to its word. We work hard at maintaining the highest



Charles Morgan

quality product and want to keep our promise of freshness to the restaurants that we sell to, including our own."

While most of the country's seafood is mislabeled, with 93% being imported, you won't find that at Harbor Docks Seafood Market. Depending on the season, they offer sushi grade tuna, grouper, swordfish, red snapper, flounder, wahoo, scamp, triggerfish, and cobia to name a few. And, of course, shrimp, oysters, and crab are available. Though Harbor Docks has several commercial boats of their own, they depend on a number of local fishing boats from Pensacola to Panama City to meet their high demand for packing and shipping orders overnight. Morgan says, "One of the largest consumers is Canada. They love King Mackerel. Here it's considered a

"We want to ensure that Gulf To Table remains true to its word. We work hard at maintaining the highest quality product and want to keep our promise of freshness to the restaurants that we sell to, including our own."

trash fish. I wish it would catch on. It is high in omega-3's, and delicious."

Fishing in the Gulf of Mexico is certainly not easy and subject to an array of constantly changing rules created and enforced by multiple state and federal agencies. From the species, sizes, and numbers of fish that can be caught, to permitting required for just commercial fishing, Morgan says, "We keep track of permits, the cost of fuel, ice, bait, and tackle too. Fishing is also subject to closures, the weather, and the fish not biting. It's complicated and difficult. It blows my mind to see intelligent people, and those that only want to eat organic, not wanting to pay the price for fresh seafood. If it's cheap, it's not fresh and more than likely mislabeled, imported, or farm raised in a pond somewhere. The seafood we sell, in my opinion, is not expensive enough. It is the last source of wild protein that we've got."

For more information about Harbor Docks Seafood & Cocktails, and to see Morgan's Local Knowledge videos, visit harbordocks.com or call (850) 837-9221.

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A7 · 54 SEVEN WELLS COURT

This 4-bedroom, 3.5-bath home offers a welcoming interchange of outdoor living and natural light. The first-floor master suite, living and dining rooms, followed by the kitchen, feature expansive windows that look upon the beautiful courtyard and pool.



A11 · 46 NORTH CHARLES STREET

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From Left to Right: Sous Chef, Simon Sullivan
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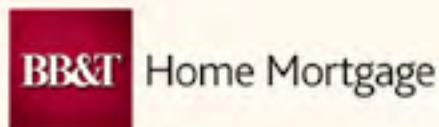


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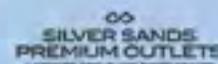
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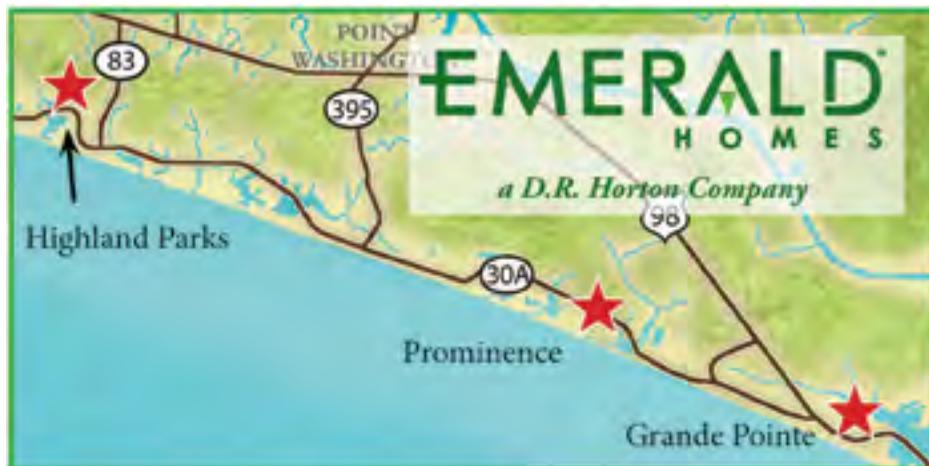
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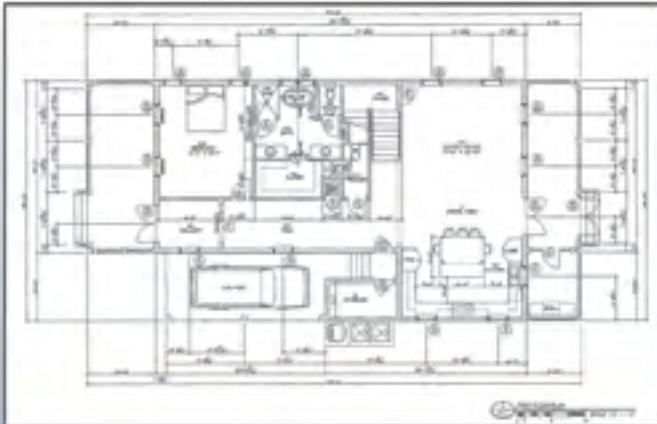


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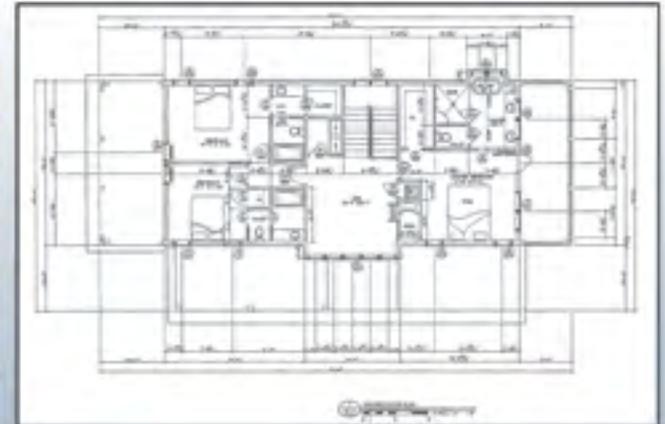


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Lot 7 Ventana Dunes, 2,453 SF, 2 M BR's
\$659,900 | MLS777496
Builder LPKK Investments



TEXT: T40153780 to 81035

45 S. Ryan Street

Beach House with 5BR/5.5 BA with 3,146SF. Sleeps 18 with 3rd floor hosting of bunks, full bed, sleeper sofa, kitchenette & full bath! Furnished with amazing views of the Gulf too! Fabulous getaway or great investment property!
MLS 753429 | \$1,550,000

Summer's Edge
on 30A

"Olde Florida" at its best! Strolling through this community by the beach with natural vegetation and lush oaks, you will find privacy and seclusion. Features include two community pools, a two minute stroll to the beach access and quaint sidewalks. Come & experience Emerald Coast's Walton County's Summer's Edge.



TEXT: T40153780 to 81035

GULF PLACE Beautiful large lot in gated community with beach access & all the amenities at the Gulf Place Town Center are yours to enjoy.
\$410,000 | MLS748440



"Beach Dreamers Dream"
83 Mountain Top Dune Dr. Santa Rosa Beach 1,700 SF This house sets on a .5 acre corner lot, with plenty of parking and a short walk to the beach. \$598,900 | MLS784704



Here it is! "The Beach Dreamers Retreat"
95 Carolyn Ln. Santa Rosa Beach, 1,462 SF, 2BR/2BA Tucked away in its natural vegetation with Bay views. This Beach House rests on an overlarge lot and is only minutes to the beach. \$359,900 | MLS784083

Karla Del Monaco
850-240-3354



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11 Spanish Town Court | \$11,900,000 | 6 BR | 7 BA
Gorgeous Gulf Front with Private Pool in Rosemary Beach



32 Abaco Lane | \$4,199,000 | 5 BR | 4.5 BA
Fully remodeled and new interior furnishings | Overlooking Abaco Park in Rosemary Beach



37 N. Green Turtle Lane | \$2,299,000 | 4 BR | 3.5 BA
Main and Carriage Houses with approved Pool Plans
South of 30-A Rosemary Beach



23 Johnstown Lane | \$1,899,000 | 4 BR | 4.5 BA
Beautifully decorated townhome with an elevator
Adjacent to the Owners Club & Pool in Rosemary Beach



240 Needlerush Drive | \$1,740,000 | 5BR | 4.5 BA
Located in the WaterColor Lake district this home offers a main and carriage house with access to the gulf front beach club



212 Cannonball Lane | \$699,900. | 4 BR | 3.5 BA
Built in 2015 and fully furnished. Move-in ready
Located in Watersound Origins



Lot 6 Beachfront Trail | \$3,900,000
48.64' x 385' | 48.64 Gulf Front Feet
Gulf Front lot in the gated community of Seclusion Dunes



1503 Marsh Point Lane
\$279,000 | .49 acres
Located within the gated community of Wild Heron

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Steve and Jan Stevens



Ashlee Mitchell

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