

Graffiti gives Baytowne local flavor

By COLLEEN COFFIELD SACHS
Daily News Columnist

SANDESTIN – The Village of Baytowne Wharf has welcomed the flavors of other places to Sandestin with restaurants such as Jim 'N' Nick's Bar-B-Q, Another Broken Egg Café, and Acme Oyster House. But they haven't forgotten our local flavor.

One of the newest dining venues at the Village is Graffiti & The Funky Blues Shack. I have been a fan of the Destin location for many years. It has always been a reliable source for good food, good value and good fun.

The folks at Graffiti have done a great job of translating their down-to-earth quirkiness to a brand new building in the Village. Everything looks comfortably worn, as if it has been there for years. Barely a surface is unadorned, with primitive art found in every sightline.

Seating with a view of the Village is offered downstairs. I like the cozy booths upstairs, and might opt for seating on the balcony for its water view when the weather is good.

Service was exemplary. The staff was warm and welcoming. Our server made sure we had everything we needed, and was well-versed in the menu and specials.

The menu at the new location is similar to the Destin menu. But there are differences, most notably the absence of pizza at the Village. And while I have longtime favorites that show up on both menus, I found the specials were a great way to try some of the more innovative dishes.

On one visit, the soup special was a pleasingly tart fennel soup. That was followed with lamb carpaccio. The main



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Graffiti is located at Sandestin's Village of Baytowne Wharf.

course special that evening was duck breast with a cherry-packed grappa reduction. Chunky ratatouille and mashed potatoes were served alongside.

As much as I enjoyed the specials, it is difficult for me to start a meal at Graffiti without ordering the Escargot Milano. Plump snails are sautéed in a delicious mix of garlic, onion, tomato and fennel seeds.

I have been known to take home some of the escargot, and an order of angel hair pasta with olive oil and garlic, and mix the two for a delicious meal (for two or three people).

The other dish that I think of every time I think of Graffiti is the Bolognese served with penne pasta. Ground beef and pork make for a thick tomato-based sauce that is accented by mushrooms, and finished with cream. It is simple, rich and wonderful.

Another classic pasta dish is chicken parmesan. A large chicken breast has a golden parmesan crust that is topped with basil pesto and mozzarella. It is served atop angel hair pasta and marinara sauce. This is an exemplary version with tender chicken and a flavorful crust.

Entrees, served with a house salad and roasted vegetables, include grouper with a hazelnut butter sauce, filet portabella, the balsamic mustard pork chop served over rosemary risotto, and chicken saltimbocca.

Portions at Graffiti are large. Every dish we ordered was big enough for two to share, or to produce an abundant doggie bag. This of course makes it difficult to save room for dessert. But desserts at Graffiti are so good, they would be worth the trip even without all the other delicious food.

A chocolate-laced tiramisù

was incredibly rich, and hazelnut crème brulee was subtle, but delicious. Our thick slice of Key lime pie looked like a cheesecake, but had the silky smooth texture and bright lime flavor of a classic.

Best among the desserts was a dense, moist almond cake sitting in a pool of heady sabayon and surrounded by a tart pomegranate sauce.

The Funky Blues Shack part of the equation offers live music, including local favorites such as Reed Waddle and Cadillac Willy. There are also nightly drink specials.

Graffiti has seamlessly drop their restaurant and blues bar into the Village. In doing so, more good food and fun have come to the Village, along with a big dose of local flavor.

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Colleen Coffield Sachs is restaurant reviewer for the Daily News.

DiningFACTS

Graffiti & The Funky Blues Shack

Location

109 Cannery Lane, The Village of Baytowne Wharf, Sandestin
Telephone: 424-6650

Hours

Every day, 5-10 p.m.

Reservations

Accepted for parties of 12 or more

Handicap accessibility

Good

Children's menu

Yes

Price range

Appetizers

\$11 - \$13

Soups and salads

\$5 - \$8

Pasta and entrees

\$14 - \$32

Dessert

\$7

Children's Menu

\$4 - \$5

Payment

Major credit cards

Atmosphere

★★★★

Value

★★★★

Food

★★★★

Overall rating

★★★★



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A LA CARTE

JANUARY

Jan. 12: **Cuvee Beach**, 36120 Emerald Coast Parkway, Destin, 650-8900. Overall rating: ★★★½

Jan. 5: **Ruby Tuesday**, 573 North Beal Parkway, Fort Walton Beach, 862-0295. Overall rating: ★★★

DECEMBER

Dec. 29: Colleen's year-end review named **Café Thirty-A** restaurant of the year.

Dec. 22: **JB's Chinese Buffet & Take Out**, 16735 U.S. Highway 331 South, Freeport, 835-0201. Overall rating: ★★★½

Dec. 15: **The Lighthouse Restaurant**, 878 U.S. Highway 98 East, Destin, 654-

2828. Overall rating: ★★★½

Dec. 8: **Scully's on the Bayou**, 200 Eglin Parkway N.E., Fort Walton Beach, 862-2542. Overall rating: ★★★

Dec. 1: **Sushi Siam**, 4236 Legendary Drive, Destin Commons, Destin, 650-5861. Overall rating: ★★★

NOVEMBER

Nov. 24: **Olive Garden**, 34970 Emerald Coast Parkway, Destin, 650-2307. Overall rating: ★★★

Nov. 17: **Azteca Mexican Restaurant**, 789 North Ferdon, Crestview, 682-8206. Overall rating: ★★★½

Nov. 10: **Rutherfords 465**, Regatta Bay, Destin, 337-8888. Overall rating: ★★★