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FOOD

New waterfront restaurant opens on Captiva with fresh seafood, spectacular sunset views



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Fresh seafood, creative cocktails and stunning Captiva sunsets are just a few things you'll discover at The Shipyard.

The nautical-themed restaurant, a nod to the island's history, opened next to Old Captiva House at Tween Waters Island Resort & Spa on May 15.

"We've gotten so much local support," said Food and Beverage Manager Jennifer Carlino. "People from Sanibel, Cape Coral, Fort Myers. Everyone in the community is so supportive. We've been progressively getting busier and busier."

Hurricane Ian delayed The Shipyard's targeted opening date in October.

"We were in the eye," Carlino said. "Whatever water came in was from wind."



Enjoying a casual yet elevated dining experience at The Shipyard. *Milissa Sprecher Photography*

The Shipyard takes up the first floor of what is the reimagining of the Crow's Nest.

"I miss the old fireplace, but I love the lightness and brightness of this," said Tony Lapi, who purchased Tween Waters Inn with partners in 1976. "This was our flagship."

History and sunset views of the Gulf

Florida's boating and fishing history is reflected everywhere you look, including the rope-partitioned booths, a colorful buoy-covered wall, fishing captain portraits and a brass engine order telegraph stationed near the bar.

Sunlight flows into the dining room from an expansive bank of windows overlooking the Gulf of Mexico and is carried far into the restaurant by individual overhead lights.

"You can see the water and the sunset all the way from the corner of the bar," Carlino said. "It gets buzzing in here around sunset. Some people will run outside to see it too."

Breakfast, lunch and dinner on the menu

"What's also nice is the new kitchen I put in three years ago," said Lapi, Sanibel Captiva Beach Resorts' president and chairman of the board. "There was a walk-in wooden cooler when I got here in 1976."

That new kitchen is serving breakfast (7:30-11 a.m.); lunch (11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.); lite bites (2-5 p.m.) and dinner 5-10 p.m. seven days a week.

"Breakfast is incredibly busy here," Carlino said. "They really do a nice job. Locals and guests come out for it."

The menu runs the gamut from two eggs and toast to banana bread French toast to Captiva House hash - a three-colored potato hash topped with shrimp sausage, two eggs and hollandaise.

Later in the day, small plates, greens, tacos, sandwiches, burgers, pasta and, of course, seafood sail into the menu, created by co-executive chefs Greg Nelson and John Feagans.

Popular selections in the first two weeks include lite bites of ceviche, a tower of onion rings and Shipyard shrimp (steamed and tossed in signature sauce). Fish tacos, grouper in sandwich and tortilla crusted form, a bleu cheese and bacon burger, shrimp and grits, and a seafood boil with fish, shrimp, clams, mussels, calamari, andouille sausage, corn-on-the-cob, redskin potatoes and tomatoes are other best-sellers.



The Shipyard's shrimp tacos are a coastal delight. *Milissa Sprecher Photography*

Drink menu has craft cocktails

The drink menu includes a selection of craft cocktails - think Key lime pie, raspberry lemon drop, martinis, cosmos and mojitos, plus beer (including Captiva Blonde on tap), wine and spirits (including Shipyard branded whiskey).

"It's a great place to come and grab a drink," Carlino said. "There are no reservations here. It's first-come, first served, much more casual than Old Captiva House."

The Shipyard is just a taste of what is to come here.



A lemon drop is one of several craft cocktails available at The Shipyard. *Milissa Sprecher Photography*

Crow's Nest Steakhouse adds another level

Crow's Nest Steakhouse, set to open early next month if all goes according to schedule, will occupy the second floor and provide even more stunning sunset views.

"We're really looking at an experience restaurant," said Kim McGonnell, the food and beverage operations manager for Sanibel Captiva Beach Resorts. "It's a small intimate setting with tableside experiences (like Caesar salads or a smoked old fashioned) and a cocktail list with high-end spirits. We will feature about 40 different kinds of whiskeys. We're aging some of our own whiskeys in-house."

Less than half the size of the downstairs, it will have a speakeasy feel with seating for just 65, by reservation only. The main access point will be a sleek and modern wooden staircase leading up from The Shipyard. Once ushered upstairs, guests will be greeted by a large, U-shaped bar and intimate tables scattered around.

"We don't want standing room only," said McGonnell. "You'll have your own seat with an amazing view of the Gulf. The same view as downstairs, just elevated. It will be intimate. We really aren't anticipating groups larger than eight."

The nautical theme will continue upstairs, only with a more upscale vibe. Gold, white and blue tones are carried throughout. A suspended platform hangs over the bar.

"We have a million-dollar view," said McGonnell. "There are no TVs. We want guests to slow down, enjoy their meals, and have great drinks and food. And just to enjoy being on Captiva."