

EACH YEAR *SOUTHERN BREEZE* BRINGS READERS THE BEST OF THE GULF COAST. THIS YEAR WE'VE ASSEMBLED A FANTASTIC LIST OF OUR FAVORITES. WE HOPE YOU LOVE THEM AS MUCH AS WE DO.

23

By Deborah Burst, Marlo Kirkpatrick, Mary-Allison Lancaster, Michelle Roberts Matthews, Mark A. Newman, and Franklin Viola

Best things about the gulf coast



1 **touristy guilty pleasure**

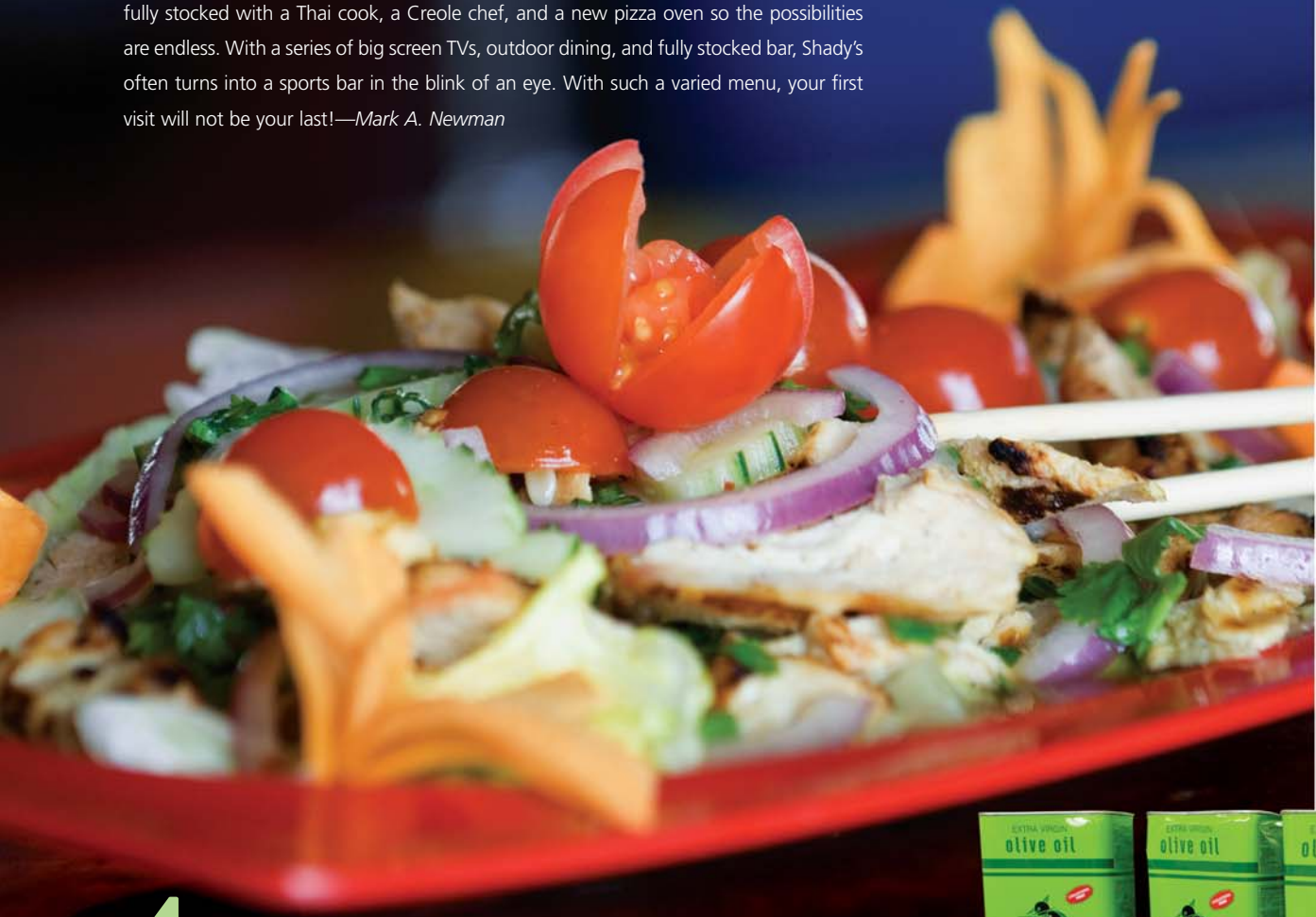
After a harrowing work week and a weekend of familial obligations, nothing soothed my jangled nerves better than detouring to the Crescent City on Sunday afternoons and heading to Pat O'Brien's in the French Quarter. To just sit and relax with a couple of their world-famous Hurricanes and unwind while chatting with friends on my cell phone left me refreshed...albeit with a red tongue!—*Mark A. Newman*

2 spot to ignore your iPod on mobile bay

As cool as MP3 players are, nothing beats live music. Catch a great lineup of musicians at the Bluegill Restaurant on the Causeway between Mobile and Spanish Fort. With a giant deck that provides a laid-back, breezy spot and a view of the marsh and boats going by, what could be better? www.bluegill.net.—Michelle Matthews

3 eclectic menu

Whether you have a hankering for steak, gumbo, or chicken pad thai, Shady's New World Cuisine on Pass Road in Biloxi is essentially "one stop shopping." The kitchen is fully stocked with a Thai cook, a Creole chef, and a new pizza oven so the possibilities are endless. With a series of big screen TVs, outdoor dining, and fully stocked bar, Shady's often turns into a sports bar in the blink of an eye. With such a varied menu, your first visit will not be your last!—Mark A. Newman



4 extra virgin (olive oil, that is)

Only the first cold pressed olive oil with 0-1% acidity can be called "extra virgin" and is a must to cook your homemade dishes to perfection. From pasta to steaks, you never know how much better extra virgin olive oil can improve a dish until you try it.

Produced from their own olive grove in Chania (Han-e-a'h) Crete, Steve and Alice Vatsolakis import and sell extra virgin olive oil at Shoreline Foods & Deli located at 1180 W. Main St. in Pensacola, FL. Ph 850-433-8852, www.shorelinedeli.com.—Franklin J. Viola



5 place to take shrimps for shrimp

At the Original Oyster House on the Causeway in Spanish Fort, Alabama, kids eat free on Tuesday nights. Replete with strolling clowns and balloon animals, the circus-like atmosphere is alive in this family-friendly establishment that overlooks a serene spot on the Mobile River Delta. There's also a sandy playground underneath the building.—*Michelle Matthews*

6 long haul

A scenic 31-mile recreational corridor with 26 unique bird habitats and five Northshore communities, the Tammany Trace Hiking and Biking Trail on Louisiana's North Shore welcomes bicyclists, equestrians, rollerbladers, and joggers.—*Deborah Burst*



7 artist potpourri

Art community leader George Marks opened Arnaudville's Town Market a year ago prompting an artistic renaissance inside his sleepy hometown of Arnaudville, Louisiana (pop. 1,500). Choose from exquisite craftsmanship such as jewelry, woodworks, ceramics, sculptures, fine art, rural art, silk clothing, and iron works. Bring a fork with ya and listen to local musicians jamming on Friday nights at the JAMbalaya pot luck dinners.—*Deborah Burst*

gulf coast movies

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Quintessential Brando classic
New Orleans

DÉJÀ VU

High-octane Denzel flick
New Orleans, St. Martin Parrish

THE TRUMAN SHOW

Carrey in an idyllic setting
Florida's Emerald Coast

SKELETON KEY

A voodoo thriller
New Orleans

INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE

The Brad Pitt/
Tom Cruise blood feast
New Orleans

8



9 dinner cruise...with dolphin chaperones

What could be better than sailing along eating freshly cracked crab, steamed shrimp, corn on the cob, potatoes, and more on a refurbished Biloxi schooner? Not much that I can think of! Orange Beach, Alabama-based Corsair Charters offers guests 60 feet of deck space to catch a glimpse of a beautiful sunset, have a romantic moment on the foredeck, or watch Captain Mike Broussard haul in the evening's catch. www.corsaircharters.com.—*Mark A. Newman*



10 where the wild things are

At Global Wildlife Preserve, take a wagon tour of a 900-acre wildlife preserve, the United State's largest, on the border of St. Tammany and Tangipahoa Parishes. The preserve features rare and endangered animals from all over the world. For more details, www.globalwildlife.com, 985-796-3585.—*Deborah Burst*



11 pampered winning streak

Harrah's Casino New Orleans, the largest land-based Vegas-style casino in the South, has jazzed up the New Orleans entertainment scene with the glitz and glamour of the new Harrah's Hotel and Fulton Street promenade, just steps away from Harrah's Casino. Indulge the senses in oversized rooms, suites, and the crown jewel, the 26th floor, the pinnacle of luxury and hospitality which also features butler service. In addition to the Besh Steakhouse, the Fulton Street Promenade brings Chef Todd English's Riche restaurant, the jazz club 528 (an 1852 historic building reminiscent of the 19th century jazz clubs), and a classic beer garden with the Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant. Look for more Fulton Street promenade venues to come.—*Deborah Burst*

12 theatre company

Since 1946, the Biloxi Little Theatre has been presenting live entertainment—musicals, plays, concerts—to theatre veterans and “first timers” alike. Nestled on the eastern end of “ole Biloxi” in a historical facility that has been newly renovated, BLT presents family friendly fare such as *The Miracle Worker* and *A Christmas Carol* along with more “adult contemporary” gems such as *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, thus truly providing something for everyone. www.4blt.org.—*Mark A. Newman*

jewelry

13

The name says it all—Ooh LaLa!! Walk into the eclectic store and find the latest jewelry fashions. Want chunky jewelry? They've got it. Want the latest fashions seen on celebrities? They have it. Want star treatment? They'll give it to you. You can walk circles empty-handed in this store and come out dizzy but with arms full of great jewelry. There are three Alabama locations: Fairhope, Orange Beach, and Spanish Fort.—*Mary-Allison Lancaster*

15

edifice complex

Opening later this year, the 35-story RSA Tower—Alabama's tallest building and the tallest along the Gulf Coast—will soar high above downtown Mobile. Along with this gleaming new skyscraper, the adjacent Battle House Hotel, a downtown landmark that has sat vacant far too long but has been completely renovated, will open its doors once again as a Marriott property. Urban renewal is alive and well in downtown Mobile!—*Michelle Matthews*

16

galloping gourmet

For more than two decades, Chef Andrew Selz has been entertaining and educating individuals and organizations with his energetic approach to food, cooking, and public speaking. Chef Selz has served as personal chef to President Clinton and family at their vacation retreats, and continues to serve as a food preparation and presentation consultant for the United States Navy. Keep your eyes peeled for his new, very unusual restaurant along the Emerald Coast that you will never forget!—*Mary-Allison Lancaster*

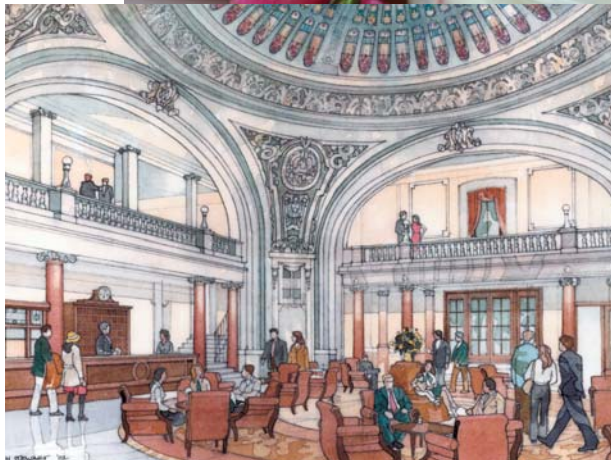
breakfast dynasty

14

Just one block from Lake Pontchartrain, you can savor the best breakfast on the Gulf Coast inside a charming 1920s cottage at the Broken Egg Café. Try their signature grits and grillades, paned veal smothered for hours in a dark veal stock roux served over a hefty plate of grits with a pillowy biscuit or indulge your taste buds with a brioche French toast stuffed with fresh Louisiana strawberries and blueberries. Pay them a visit at the original location of 200 Girod Street, Mandeville, LA, 985-624-3388, or visit other locations throughout northwest Florida.

www.anotherbrokenegg.com.

—*Deborah Burst*



17

Place where everybody knows your name...

A local watering hole in the miniscule community of Kiln, the Broke Spoke, is the place to go for a cold beer and a friendly game of pool. The décor here includes unmatched bar stools, glowing beer signs, and Green Bay Packers memorabilia—a nod to Kiln's favorite son, quarterback Brett Favre. An impressive collection of patrons' attire—most of said attire equipped with lace and double cups—dangles from the ceiling.—*Marlo Kirkpatrick*

18 gourmet food market

The Naman's Midtown Market has been synonymous with the city of Mobile since the 1930s. Anyone who has been to a party catered by Alec Naman knows the mouthwatering effects the food has on taste buds. Haven't tried the Naman food yet? Now you have the chance to savor it with just one quick stop. Alec and his brother, Thomas, opened their newest addition—Naman's Midtown Market on Old Shell Road in Mobile. Stop by and pick out a papaya smoked pork loin, Asian style baby back ribs, or something as simple and delectable as seafood gumbo.—*Mary-Allison Lancaster*

sweet sensation 19

Beignets, the heavenly pillows of powder-crested dough, have made a big comeback in the Big Easy. Loyal fans come from all over the world to cheer on the creamy coffee and steamy nuggets. A sinful appetizer before a day long workout of parades, the perfect cure for a hurricane hangover, or—rumors have it—the ultimate elixir in sweetening up the insurance claims adjuster.—*Deborah Burst*



sigh of relief on the mississippi coast 20

As life gets back to normal in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, a handful of celebrity chefs are opening restaurants in casinos. We say, keep the stars coming (and cooking)!—*Michelle Matthews*

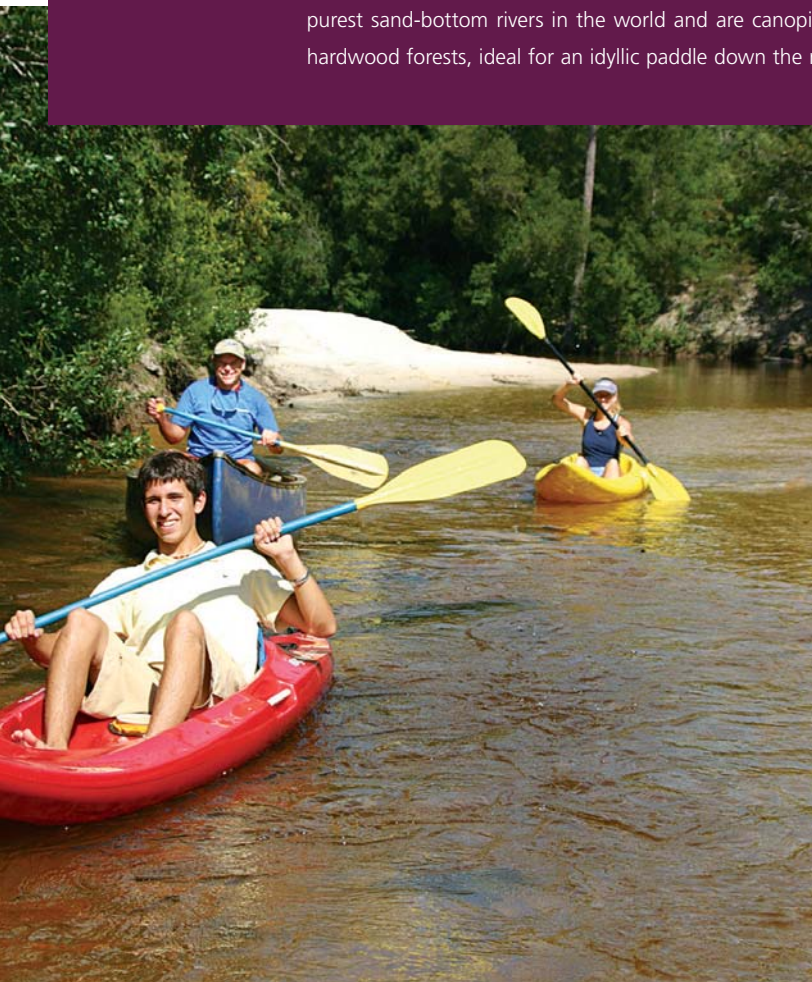
TODD ENGLISH'S OLIVES
Beau Rivage in Biloxi

LUKE PALLADINO'S BRAGOZZO
Isle of Capri in Biloxi

EMERIL'S NEW ORLEANS FISH HOUSE
Island View Casino Resort
in Gulfport

21 outdoor adventures

If you're ready for a mental time out, you can't beat the rivers of Santa Rosa County Florida. Characterized by a grounded sense of place, the area is an ideal spot to reflect, play, and connect with nature, family, and self. Aside from a backdrop of breathtaking waterways, hundreds of miles of canoe trails have earned this region the moniker "Canoe Capitol of Florida." Its rivers are among the purest sand-bottom rivers in the world and are canopied by longleaf pine and hardwood forests, ideal for an idyllic paddle down the river.—*Mark A. Newman*



food on a stick 22

At first my eyes couldn't believe it: pie on a stick?!? But it got better—it was chocolate-covered key lime pie on a stick! A concoction from the Boatyard Restaurant in Panama City Beach, the brainchild of Chef Konrad Jochum, it is as good as you think it is and provides an ideal excuse to go off your diet! www.boatyardclub.com.—*Mark A. Newman*

23 louisiana's best gifts

Bayou Country is a Louisiana country store in Slidell filled with everything that makes Louisiana special. From pralines to cookbooks, hot sauces to barbeque potions, home accents to Louisiana gifts, Bayou Country has something for everyone. Or visit their Blue Bayou Café for their Cajun Sandwich combos. 888-571-3200.—*Deborah Burst*