

The PRIME SPOT To Rock out

By Dave Holton



Visit the website for Mike Dianna's Grill Room and you'll be greeted with a quote from the famed Grateful Dead singer and guitarist Jerry Garcia, "You do not want to be considered just the best of the best. You want to be considered the only ones who do what you do."

At Mike Dianna's Grill Room, they embody that quote in everything they do. People often associate USDA Prime Angus Beef and white table clothes with a certain lexicon full of French words like *maitre d'* and *du jour* and an ambiance often described as having a certain *je ne sais quoi* – only we do know what it is, don't we ... pretention. And that's an attitude that we on the Outer Banks try to avoid at all costs.

"We understand that people are on vacation," says Meghann Pauls, owner/manager of Mike Dianna's Grill Room. "As long as you wear some kind of clothing, you are welcome in our restaurant."

If you've ever heard the phrase "local as it gets," Meghann is the perfect example. She grew up in Corolla, and she's been at Mike Dianna's Grill Room for a long time. "I've worked at the restaurant since 2002 when it was still JK's," she says. "I just bought it last year. I've always enjoyed my work, and I realized that this is just something I really wanted to do. The opportunity came up, and I took it."

Meghann Pauls fills many roles at Mike Dianna's Grill Room. Like most restaurant owners on the Outer Banks, she manages, cooks, runs food, hosts and cleans up after. And like most restaurateurs, she not only works hard each night to keep up with the day to day but also keeps her focus on the future. Just like the shifting coastline, the industry and the demands of visitors change every year.

After she had taken over the restaurant, she decided that they would really focus in on making Mike Dianna's Grill Room "the only ones who do what they do" to paraphrase Jerry. This year, Mike Dianna's Grill Room has done away with lunch and brunch because that's not what they are about. They are about great dinner, with prime steaks and fresh local seafood. From 5 to 9:30 p.m., the team at Mike Dianna's is ready and waiting to serve you a menu that changes often so that the team can offer you only the freshest and best ingredients based on what's available each day.

In addition to the USDA Prime Angus cuts, all hand-selected, aged and cut in-house,

then marinated, seasoned and grilled over native hardwoods and available with home-made sauces and butter, Mike Dianna's Grill Room offers an array of options including their Mike's Famous Crab Cakes and Outer Banks Seafood Chowder, a two time Outer Banks Chowder Cookoff Award winner.

Feel free to bring in all your friends and family. "We can do 18 people at a time, no problem," says Meghann. "Just call ahead and let us know — we do take reservations. And if you have an event, we have a private room that can accommodate up to 45 people."

But there are plenty of good restaurants in Corolla, right? What makes this one different?

When Meghann took over the restaurant from the original owner, Mike Dianna, she kept the name because Mike is such a well-known figure in the Corolla community. Over the years, Mike has been more than a restaurateur, he's also been a music entrepreneur, responsible for founding the Mustang Music Festival in 2012. In addition to the festival, Mike Dianna is still hard at work setting up events for Mike Dianna's Grill Room. Dianna books the music acts that appear nightly at Mike Dianna's, and these acts aren't just your local garage bands. In May, the restaurant hosted the Mustang Spring Jam, and kicked off a free concert series.

"From Tuesday to Friday we will have music every night out on the covered deck," says Meghann, "with family-friendly groups from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. That runs through the season into late August. And we have a free concert series every Wednesday night from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. We have some big-name groups, like Ben Miller Band, that are touring coliseums and then come here and play at Mike Dianna's Grill Room. We have bluegrass, rock and roll ... something different every week."

Mike Dianna's Grill Room has a combination that truly makes them the only ones that do what they do, with a menu that you'd find in a fine dining establishment but with a rock and roll vibe that makes pretention an impossibility. Be sure to check out their music lineup at corollaguide.com/mike-diannas-grill-room/events and don't miss some of the great shows that Mike Dianna's Grill Room hosts. If you want the best steaks and seafood, chops and chowder with a side of awesome music you'd usually have to go to an amphitheater to hear, Mike Dianna's Grill Room has just the one-of-a-kind experience for you.

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A Fish in a Hurricane

By Dave Holton

It was a dark and stormy night

Hurricane Matthew wasn't supposed to hit the Outer Banks. According to forecasts, the storm would sweep into the ocean somewhere around the South Carolina border. By Monday, October 10, 2016, according to the experts, the seas around Hatteras would be calm, and the skies would be clear.

And by Monday, when the curfews for Dare County were finally lifted, the seas were indeed calm, and the skies were indeed clear. But everything else had changed.

Because Saturday morning, the storm slammed straight up the coast instead of turning out to sea. For 12 hours, Hurricane Matthew hammered beaches from Hatteras to Corolla with 15 inches of rain and 80 mph winds.

The *Outer Banks Sentinel* reported property damage totals around \$52 million. Parts of Highway 12 were gone. And in the middle of the destruction stood the water-logged shell of Red Drum Grille & Taphouse.

"A torrential downpour started around 10:30 p.m. or so," remembers Brian Brown, co-owner of Red Drum. "I saw the water coming up to the curb, but I thought we were okay ... that we would just get a wet floor." He shakes his head, his eyes cast to the floor as he focuses on a memory he'd just as soon forget.

"Then the wind started, around 3 a.m.," Brian says. "That's what killed us. Sustained winds of 80 miles per hour blew the water right down the road and into the buildings."

He sighs. "I've never seen water cover the beach road like that."

In the beginning

In 1984, when Brian moved from Winston-Salem, N.C., to help open the first JK's Restaurant on the beach, he was just 24. Like most 24-year-olds, he wanted to find the nightlife. But the Outer Banks was a different place back then. "It was like a ghost town," Brian says. "I rode out, looked around for a bar or a restaurant, and there was nothing. I thought, 'What have I done?'"

Luckily, the scene changed with the arrival of restaurants like Tortuga's Lie in 1989 and Rundown Café in 1993. Brian worked at Tortuga's as a bartender, and it was there that he met Craig Errickson. Craig was fresh from culinary school, and the two shared common restaurant-ownership aspirations.

Brian had developed a brew-house concept with two other potential partners. It was based on the beer-centric alehouses that were popular in other states, but Brian's idea was to also offer noteworthy food. However, the idea fell apart due to

North Carolina's complicated regulations about breweries at the time.

Undeterred, Brian kept searching for opportunities. When the building at mile-post 10 on the beach road in Nags Head became available in 1998, he leapt and a storm of activity followed: "I got the building. I signed the lease while I was still at Tortuga's. I called Craig, who was at Rundown, and asked him if he wanted to start a restaurant. Then it all happened over night."

With some backing from friends and family, Brian and Craig opened their restaurant, naming it after the legendary fish that historically brought droves of fishermen to the Outer Banks. They remained almost true to Brian's original idea by creating a food-focused taphouse. "We were the first on the beach with 18 taps," Brian says.

The partnership had its growing pains. "There weren't any fist fights, at least," Brian says with a laugh. Both owners put in long hours for the first five years while getting established and settling into a groove.

All along they've kept their dedication to the food and added some refinements over the years. "Our original menu was crazy," Brian says. "We had bangers and mash and shepherd's pie!" Since then Chef Craig has fine-tuned the menu with Travis Markham, who's been at Red Drum for 10 years. "Travis is another culinary guy," Brian says. "He can cook anything from panzanella to etouffee."

Swimming through the storm

On Tuesday, October 11, 2016, Brian and Craig assessed the damage. "I was shocked because in 20 years we never had water in the building, and now there were 30 inches of water inside," Brian says. "But we decided to rebuild, to get it done and move on."

With the help of Ryan Brophy, a local jack-of-all-trades, they got to work. It took until mid-November to dry the building enough to rebuild. "Even the wait staff pitched in. We all got out the saws, cut out base-board and tore out bathrooms," Brian says.

The restaurant community looked out for the folks at Red Drum. "We're technically competitors, but we support each other," Brian says. "Mark from Lucky 12, Mike from Rundown Cafe, Richard and Bob from Tortuga's, they all fed us. Mike brought us six bags of food one day."

He smiles appreciatively. "I kept telling my staff things could have been worse. We could have had 5 feet of water instead of 2.5, or the place could have burned down. Life is not that tough for us here. This wasn't life or death. This was a fix it and move on situation."

After an off-season of repairs, Red Drum Grille & Taphouse reopened on March 3, 2017.

Brian feels fortunate to have the restaurant open, and he's not alone. One customer wrote in a recent TripAdvisor review, "Glad to see Red Drum's back in business after Hurricane Matthew!"

Stop by Red Drum, and you'll soon understand why everyone's so excited that this fish survived the storm.



Stop by Red Drum, and you'll soon understand why everyone's so excited that this little fish survived the storm.



RED DRUM
GRILLE & TAPHOUSE

Here's to the Dreamers

By Dave Holton

Gail Kowalski, owner of Jewelry by Gail, Inc., has spent her life entwined in an uncertain dance with her dreams, an existence personified in the movie *La La Land* by Emma Stone's character Mia, an actress struggling to get her break. When Mia finally lands an audition that could change her life forever, she captivates the casting director with an aching solo, reaching out and into the chest of every audience member . . .

"Here's to the ones who dream, Foolish as they may seem, Here's to the hearts that ache, Here's to the mess we make."

Gail lives every day amazed and humbled that she has had such success in achieving her dreams. "Any art-related business is a miracle if it even survives 10 years," she says. As of 2017 it will be four decades since Gail founded Jewelry by Gail, Inc. "It's truly shocking to me that it has been 40 years," she says. "It's like Mr. Toad's Wild Ride."

Gail started dreaming early, when she ventured from her childhood city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Siena Heights College in Adrian, Michigan, to study jewelry making. At school, she developed her distinct style of balanced asymmetry. Then, in 1977, she borrowed \$1,500 from her grandmother and set up a studio/shop in Nags Head, North Carolina.

"A bit of madness is key To give us new colors to see. Who knows where it will lead us? And that's why they need us."

Gail began as many other artists, constrained by cash flow. She couldn't afford gold, so she designed in silver. But Gail garnered a following, moved into finer metals and upgraded her location in 1987 to her current showrooms and studio on Driftwood Street in Nags Head. Along the way, she won the Johnson Matthey Platinum Award and the De Beers Diamonds Today Award.

At first, Gail's realized dream featured recurring guest stars: Outer Banks visitors who returned year after year. But over the last two decades, Gail noticed a different dynamic. "It used to be families who came every year and stayed in the same rental. Now, vacationers are here three days and gone, maybe just once. It's always a brand-new audience." She needed a way to reach people before they came.



"So, bring on the rebels, The ripples from pebbles, The painters, and poets and plays."

Aspiring to show her designs on a grander stage, Gail dreamed of Hollywood, a place where jewelry-makers can shine for the masses, their wares worn by the stars. But getting a break in that world seemed impossible. "There were two ways to get in, you were either Julia Robert's cousin or you knew someone who functions in that world. And I didn't know anyone."

Many Hollywood stories have a magical moment, and Gail's came in the form of a letter from Platinum Guild International inviting her to submit to their 2004 Emmy's Jewelry Preview Suite, an event run by celebrity stylist Michael O'Conner, where stars could find designs to wear to award shows. She entered as a long shot against designers whose designs were collectively worth millions.

"I didn't have the typical entry – my designs aren't loaded with diamonds and expensive – but I picked my prettiest stones and designs and entered," she says, adding a classic Outer Banks colloquialism. "You can't catch a fish if you don't throw out bait." And catch a fish she did. O'Conner called her his wild-card and put her on his short list of designers

he would always invite to show their work.

Now, over a decade later, you'll find pictures in Gail's showroom of celebrities garnished with Gail's designs. In September 2016, Gail loaned her Satin Slipper Pearl Earrings to Alexandra Billings of Transparent for Emmy Awards events. Alexandra's mother admired the earrings so much that she wore them instead. And in July 2016, when Jewelry by Gail customers Rhonda and Dwight Ayscue knew they would be meeting Johnny Depp backstage at a Hollywood Vampires concert, they decided to present him with a gift. They came to Gail, who crafted a tribute piece to Depp's children and career, a medallion and charm necklace including a rose, a lily and a jack-in-the-box to represent Depp's children Lily-Rose and Jack. Upon receipt, Depp posed for a photo with the piece and even wore it home.

"And here's to the fools who dream, Crazy as they may seem, Here's to the hearts that break, Here's to the mess we make."

Do you dream of stardom? Maybe you don't long for the bright lights of Hollywood, but you'd still like to shine bright, every day, in your own world. Well, don't worry if you aren't Julia Roberts' cousin. "Nowadays, everyone can be a star if they want to, in their own life," says Gail. "Everybody wants to be one-of-a-kind, nobody wants to be cookie cutter. Our jewelry can provide that because our designs are all unique, and people can find something they connect with here that speaks to them individually."



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Of Sands Shifting AND FISH TACOS

By Dave Holton

The sands of the Outer Banks are always on the move. For evidence of that fact, one need only to walk to the southern side of Jockey's Ridge to witness the barely visible spire of a castle that once crowned a putt-putt golf course. On the islands, the wind and surf both giveth and they taketh away, something the team at Sea Ranch Resort knows all too well. "At one point," says Belinda Lucey, director of sales and catering, "staying here was like being on a cruise ship. The beach eroded away to the point that you could look out your window straight over the water."

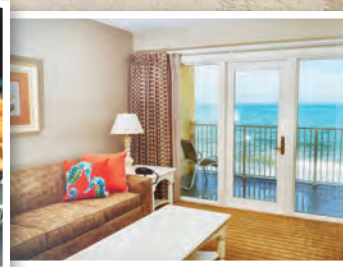
Says Torey Ossman, sales manager, "The Sea Ranch has weathered many storms, including Isabel, which was tough. But the new owners — six years now — continue to improve and upgrade the property while maintaining the character this place has always had." And recently the beach nourishment project has built a nice buffer providing a wide stretch of beach behind the resort that offers guests plenty of space to lay out blankets. Of course, nothing is permanent, and this battle will never be over.

The Sea Ranch resort has stood strong since 1963, a stalwart home away from home at the heart of the Outer Banks, perched at the dividing line between land and sea where mysteries stretch out to the very horizon and beyond. There, on the back patio of the resort's restaurant, Beachside Bistro, visitors can witness one thing that hasn't changed over the years, the view. Sea Ranch Resort guests can enjoy the very same sunrise that once warmed the hearts of the earliest vacationers on the Outer Banks — though we've come quite a ways on the Outer Banks since they first built vacation homes in the 1820s.

Alongside the fishing of Hatteras and horses of Corolla, we now have malls and a water park for the shoppers and thrill-seekers. We have lighthouses and landmarks for the history buffs. We have movies and plenty of putt-putt golf courses. But we also have the waves, the sun and the sand. And Sea Ranch Resort occupies a special place at the center of it all, in Kill Devil Hills (MP 7) just minutes from the Wright Brother's National Memorial, perched at the intersection between progress and nature, between modernity and history.

Over the years, Sea Ranch's owners have added to its collection of comforts. The resort's amenities include an enclosed heated swimming pool, outdoor grilling and a picnic area. The rooms have HBO, WiFi, a microwave and a refrigerator. Two-bedroom ocean-front suites feature fully equipped kitchens and washers/dryers.

Sea Ranch also offers full wedding packages, and there's nothing they won't do to make sure your every wish is granted. "The parents



of one groom brought a Bigfoot costume," says Belinda. "Their son was a huge fan of Bigfoot, and they wanted us to have someone walk up the beach in the costume during the ceremony. So that's just what we did. It was a big hit."

And since opening in 2012, Beachside Bistro has become a destination for vacationers and locals alike, thanks in no small measure to the talents of Executive Chef Greg Sniegowski. The restaurant is owned by the resort, and its operators are employed by the hotel, which means they care as much about your stay as do the housekeepers, receptionists and owners. According to Belinda, the steamed shrimp are the best on the beach. Torey, on the other hand, goes for breakfast before work. And both said the happy hour and the music are first-class.

But I ordered the fish tacos.

While enjoying my tacos, I couldn't help but notice the boisterous bartender (named Donnie Carr, as he was happy to tell me). A transplant from Richmond, his thick Southern drawl filled the space as he laughed and joked with customers. There was a bit of rain — not to be blamed on the resort, such is nature — and he was quick to run out to the porch with a tiny cocktail umbrella for a customer's drink, "so it won't get watered down." And when I asked him the best thing on the menu — before he knew what I had ordered — he said, "the fish tacos." I felt good about my order, and the eating of said tacos would prove him to be a sound adviser.

I asked about the umbrella, and Donnie laughed. "I don't know about you, but that's the kind of attention to detail I like to see in a place." Before they left, the umbrella man and his family came inside to say goodbye to Donnie. The last thing the man said to him was, "Tell the chef the fish tacos were fantastic."

I laughed and told the umbrella man that it was a consensus all around on that point.

Nothing on the Outer Banks will ever stay the same. It's just not possible to keep the status quo on a barrier island where the winds and tides are always on the move. So, there's only one thing to do, really. Don't wait. Enjoy it now. Go to that place at the crossroads of then and now on the edge of the ocean. And when you sit down at Sea Ranch Resort's Beachside Bistro, I recommend that you try the fish tacos.



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Quality Care When You Need It Most

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Pictured Left to Right: Krissi Williams, PA-C, Urgent Care; Kerry Partis, M.D., Family Medicine; Leslie DeLigio, DNP-C, Urgent Care; Maggie Dawson, NP-C, Urgent Care

By Dave Holton

Remember the adage “Hope for the best, plan for the worst?”

Every year, visitors flock to the Outer Banks with one goal: to have a great time. Most people’s idea of a great time doesn’t include a trip to the doctor. And yet, during the summer, Sentara Urgent Care at Sentara Kitty Hawk sees close to 100 patients every day. In a shared location at Sentara Kitty Hawk, the experienced care teams at Sentara Urgent Care and Sentara Family Medicine Physicians provide quality treatments for non-emergent injuries or illnesses to get you back to enjoying your vacation!

Hopefully, your vacation is nothing but the best. But, just in case the worst decides to show up, there are a few things the folks at Sentara would like you to know.

Keep the worst from happening in the first place.

Dr. Leslie DeLigio, DNP, FNP-C, a family nurse practitioner at Sentara Urgent Care, has lived and worked on the Outer Banks for more than 30 years. In her time on the beach, she’s seen visitors struggle with the same issue again and again.

“We will be happy to see patients at any time; however, if you have an illness before you travel, try to get it checked by your primary care provider before you leave,” says Dr. DeLigio.

Dr. Kerry Partis, from Sentara Family Medicine Physicians at Sentara Kitty Hawk, agrees. “As a primary care physician, I encourage my patients to see me before they leave for vacation if they think something is wrong,” says Dr. Partis. “Visitors to the Outer Banks should do the same. Their primary care provider

at home can help treat any illnesses before their vacation, hopefully keeping them well and enjoying a great time on the Outer Banks! There are also some tips you should follow as a visitor, such as always remembering to wear sunscreen and bringing along enough medications for your entire trip.”

When should I go to Urgent Care?

“The best thing patients can do is go to the right place first,” says Dr. DeLigio. “Urgent Care is for patients with minor illnesses or injuries such as fish hook injuries, jellyfish stings, sunburn, flu or cold symptoms, urinary tract infections, cuts, ear pain and sore throats.”

“If you have chest pain, dizziness or any form of internal bleeding, then you need to go directly to the emergency room,” says Dr. Partis. “However, if you live here on the Outer Banks and can be seen by your primary care provider, then that is your best option. Many times, my practice offers same day sick appointments for patients, so I can see them if something comes up unexpectedly.”

Saving You Time with Technology.

If you find your way into a jellyfish’s embrace, have no fear, you can get treatment quickly at Sentara Urgent Care. Just go to www.SentaraUrgentCare.com and reserve your spot in line. Then, just come in at your requested time and be seen. Of course, walk-ins are always welcome! So if that’s what you choose, you

can find the current wait time on the site as well.

For primary care appointments with Sentara Family Medicine Physicians in Kitty Hawk or Manteo, you can schedule an appointment online by visiting www.iwantsentaramedicalgroup.com.

At Sentara Kitty Hawk, you can expect a bit more.

At Sentara Kitty Hawk, the urgent care and primary care teams work together in collaboration to ensure both visitors and locals receive quality care. At Sentara Urgent Care, Dr. DeLigio works with Maggie Dawson, FNP-C, a family nurse practitioner who has been caring for patients on the Outer Banks for more than 10 years, and Krissi Williams, PA-C, a physician assistant in the urgent care field who grew up on the Outer Banks. Dr. Partis works at the Sentara Family Medicine Physicians practice in Kitty Hawk, but this practice also has a location in Manteo with Dr. Warren Blackburn and Denise Griggs, NP, providing care to patients there.

“By going to either Sentara Urgent Care or Sentara Family Medicine Physicians, patients benefit from electronic medical records that are shared amongst the providers. If my patient needs to go to Sentara Urgent Care, I can see this visit in their medical record for future follow-up if needed,” says Dr. Partis. “They also benefit from a team that collaborates and works well together. Our number one priority is patient care.”

Sentara is proud to now offer both primary care and urgent care services to locals and visitors on the Outer Banks. Nobody wants to visit the doctor while on vacation. But if you do, at least you can be sure that you’re going to the right place if you visit Sentara Urgent Care.

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