

Spotlight on Success

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www.windsormeade.org

Oceans & Ale — The Perfect Seaside Getaway

By Suzanne Douglas

Want an Outer Banks dining experience without leaving home? Experience a classic seafood/steakhouse restaurant with a local, vintage beach feel at Oceans & Ale, just off the "coast" at Richmond and Olde Towne Roads. Comfortable, dark wood booths and tables, sand-textured walls, a roomy bar, and spacious outdoor seating area all make you feel like you're seated at a seaside venue — without having to venture outside of Williamsburg.

With an atmosphere unlike any other in the area, Oceans & Ale's mission is to bring you the best in both seafood and non-seafood fare, seven days a week. In addition to Oceans & Ale favorites like Seafood Mac & Cheese or Jumbo Lump Crabcakes, the menu features unusual and creative entrees like Tri Tip Chimichurri Sirloin, Seafood Pot Pie, or Asian Beef Ribs. And if those don't entice you, seafood lovers can always explore the "Catch of the Day" chalkboard, which features mouth-wateringly fresh seafood entrées, every day of the week. "We are always looking to introduce our diners to new flavors and combinations," says John Wagner, who, along with Michael "Chef" Wozniak and Brian Radford, is a founding partner in the hugely successful venture.



Owners, Michael "Chef" Wozniak and John Wagner

especially unique is their vast array of local and international beers. Wagner, a long-time beer aficionado, says, "Beer is a huge part of what we do at O&A." He believes that "nothing goes better with seafood than beer," and adds, "Today, I put beer at the same level as wine." Oceans & Ale can introduce you to beers you've never tasted before, or recommend the perfect beer for the dish you've chosen. "I love spending time at

You-Can-Eat Crablegs special draws a packed crowd; and Thursdays is Island Specials Night. On Fridays, Oceans & Ale kicks off an After-Work Party, featuring Mason Jar drinks like their legendary Masonritas and Masonjitos.

Every Saturday night from 9 pm - 12 am, Oceans & Ale features live bands, with no cover charge — ever. Says Wagner, "It's an honor to have people come through our front door — we wouldn't even think of charging someone." The restaurant can accommodate small or large parties, and accepts both reservations and walk-ins. "We like to keep a space open for everyone," Wagner says.

The restaurant is especially proud of their location. Tucked into a prime corner at the Premium Outlets of Williamsburg, where the former Giuseppe's restaurant used to be, the space is something that Wagner coveted "for years." HDTV screens provide the latest sports events, booths and tables are comfortable and cozy, and dinner is also served "the O&A way": relaxed, friendly, and affordable.

In May of this year, Oceans & Ale celebrated their first anniversary, which they called

"O & A Day." The weekend began on Friday night with a live performance from the Jesse Chong Band, and continued the next day with an all-day-long beer tent, with local breweries on hand to discuss brewing methods. "Our customers aren't age-specific," says Wagner. "We get lots of retirees here, who are looking for an experience that's different from run-of-the-mill restaurants and chains. We also get students, young professionals, tourists, and everyone in between."

It's hard not to notice the special atmosphere at Oceans & Ale. "Our staff is so full of passion and energy," say the partners. "At the end of the day, it's about friendship, respect and pride. Ultimately, we look to offer our customers the excitement of a vacation with the comfort of home."



Daily "Fresh Catch" Board

Indeed, the Ocean & Ale partners have outstanding credentials. Wagner is well-known to many Williamsburg residents from his days at Ford's Colony, at Kingsmill, and most recently, as Director of Food & Beverage at the Williamsburg Marriot. Wozniak, a graduate of Johnson and Wales Culinary School in Norfolk, is a former Executive Chef at the Williamsburg Marriott, where he worked alongside Wagner for several years. And Radford is the former owner of "Hell's Kitchen Norfolk" and current owner of "HK on the Bay" in Chick's Beach.

"Chef" Wozniak, in fact, is always looking to get the freshest, highest-quality ingredients he can find. "We source our fish from right here on the Peninsula," he says with pride. "I have a great relationship with our suppliers in obtaining the best quality seafood on the market." The specialty at Oceans & Ale is undoubtedly the sea bass, which one customer described as "heaven — as good as anything you can get in the region."

What makes Oceans & Ale

guests' tables, discussing taste profiles," says Wagner, "and sharing information about the breweries and their locations."

Impressively, Oceans & Ale features 20 beers on tap, plus multiple bottled beers. Each week, six of the 20 beers are on "rotating taps," so that customers can try unique, seasonal or limited-release beers — all hand-picked by Wagner. "If you can't decide," says Wagner, "you can even order a beer flight, with four different beers to taste."

Each night at the restaurant is different: Monday is All-You-Can-Eat Wings night; Tuesday is Wine Night. On Wednesdays, the \$20 All-



in focus...

Oceans & Ale

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