

Sleepless in Bluffton

Written by Mark Shaffer

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Old Town Bluffton has maintained its reputation as a sleepy little village even as the maelstrom of annexation and development has raged around it in recent years. Recently though, a mini-boom in the restaurant and bar scene is keeping Old Town up at night. On May River Road stalwart favorites like Pepper's Porch and the May River Grill remain popular, while The Promenade offers a growing set of options all within a few steps of one another.

The rooftop bar at Capt. Woody's is quintessential Lowcountry complete with tin roof, open-air deck and iced buckets of long necks. Corks Wine Company – as the name implies – is all about the vino, but this Napa style bistro also serves up craft beers, cocktails, and beautifully prepared “big” small plates. Martinis are the main attraction at 9 Promenade. If stepping into Corks is like stepping into Napa, wandering into 9 is an inter-dimensional trip to some ultra-hip urban watering hole on Manhattan's upper east side.

The bar scene in Bluffton is not only thriving but remarkably diverse and all contained within a few pedestrian-friendly blocks. A couple of our new favorites push the trend onto Calhoun Street and the heart of Old Town.

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Vineyard 55

55 Calhoun St.

Bluffton SC

843-757-WINE (9463)



“We just went for the whole vineyard thing,” says owner Jon Rinaldi. He and brother, Joey, along with Bluffton entrepreneur, Will Guscio, have transformed the interior of this very traditional-looking Lowcountry building into an old world winery, right down to the furniture. “The tables and barstools are all made from recycled wine barrels,” he points out.

“Vineyard” may be painted on the sign, but this is something of a hybrid with a lot of components all under one roof: wine shop, beer store, coffee house, deli, bar & restaurant. The

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wine selection alone numbers around 250 different bottles from all over the planet, with an emphasis on small producers. Jon Rinaldi is also big on brew, stocking an impressive selection of beers and ales you're not likely to find on your grocer's shelf. "We'll have about 22 on tap," he says.



"What's interesting," says Will Guscio, "is that the walk up and local traffic is at such a pace that it can sustain unique businesses and we think this is very unique." Plenty of free parking is always a plus, he points out.

With a major accent on wine it's only natural that exotic meats and cheeses are featured, as well. A huge cooler just inside the front door is loaded with enough gourmet sandwiches and picnic goodies to melt any foodie's heart.

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