

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24



I used to do TV news in Las Vegas (no, really) and around this time each year a meteorologist colleague of mine would hit the air and say something like, “Our forecast: Hot. Dry. Seek shelter or die. Our next forecast will be in October.” He wasn’t far off the mark. Indeed, forecasting the weather in a place like Vegas is a lot like falling off a log most of the time. Here, it’s a bit more complicated – we get to reason with the hurricane season. But the general approach is the same once the heat index approaches that of the hinges to the gates of hell: seek shelter. And as anyone familiar with this column knows, our preferred shelter comes with cocktails and bar snacks.

What follows is a breakdown of some of our favorite Beaufort watering holes. Keep in mind the list is far from complete – so many bars, so little time. The task at hand seems never-ending and yet we remain committed to it. After all, someone’s got to do it...

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

ON THE WATERFRONT

Panini's Café



926 Bay Street (843) 379-0300

www.paniniscafe.net

Open at 11:00 am daily.

There are few spots better to sip a frosty beverage in the cool river breezes and watch the sun set beyond the city marina than the patio bar at Panini's Café. It is also the only full-service outdoor bar on the waterfront (for some inexplicable reason). And now, with the addition of a giant tent covering the entire deck, completely shaded and waterproof – perfect for a mix of live bands and DJ's Wednesday through Saturday nights.

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

Inside, the restaurant is a multi-level mix of faux Tuscan, although I'm pretty sure the paneling on the western wall could be called Polynesian. Completing this beguiling cultural schizophrenia is the bar: an ornately carved and canopied 200 year-old testament to English artisanship. It simply begs you take a seat, pull out your journal and order a cocktail - or maybe a pint? The house specialties include bellinis (Prosecco and fresh fruit juice), seasonal martinis and scratch-made sangrias in a variety of flavors and potencies. Sip a drink, catch up on your thoughts and try one of Panini's gourmet brick oven pizzas. There are none better.

Hemingway's

920 Bay St. (843) 521-4480

www.hemingways.org

Open daily at 11:00am.

The framed black and white poster of Papa that hangs behind the bar of kind of sums up the feel of the place. If Ernest were still around I have a feeling you might find his beloved Pilar tired up at the city marina and her master holding court at his namesake establishment (probably puffing on a fat Cohiba, smoking ban be damned). Hemingway's is a first class dive – or as I prefer to term it, a bar bar - and this is no bad thing. Great bar bars are hard to come by in this age of corporate homogenization. Bars like Hemingway's are never designed, they happen over time. Located in a subterranean corner of the magnificent Thomas Law Building, beneath the huge columns and equally impressive palmettos, the bar is a lot like a '68 Mini Cooper – unique, well driven, and classic but not for the claustrophobic. The actual bar seats half a dozen patrons with a few tables against the wall. The place is festooned with an impressive accumulation of autographed currency, memorabilia and bric-a-brac and the clientele is just as eclectic. Late night this is where Beaufort's service industry comes to unwind, which is the sort of ringing endorsement any bar bar worth it's Jägermeister craves without ever really seeking it.

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

Luther's Rare and Well Done

910 Bay St. (843) 521-1888

[Find them on Facebook](#)



Imagine Cheers transported from Boston to Beaufort and you'll find Norm Peterson and Cliff Claven arguing over "Final Jeopardy" right here. In fact, Luther's has a palpable Cheers vibe to it, only with a spectacular view of the river and a pet-friendly deck. There's also a brimming shot of semper fi, the Marine Corps motto which – come to think of it – translates to what I like to call the Regular's Creed: *Always Faithful*. In fact, had Luther's been around when Pat Conroy was hammering out

The Great Santini, my guess is that Bull Meachum and his pals might have hung out here, maybe even tried that gag with the can of soup. These days you might catch sight of world famous daredevil, Robbie Knievel at the bar. If you're a regular or even a semi-regular, chances are your beverage of choice is on the bar before your butt's on the stool. Claim a table or a seat at the big rectangular split-level bar (curiously, one side's taller than the other) to watch the game or the race on a plethora of flatscreens. Luther's features live music Thursday through Saturday with happy hour daily from 4-7. We recommend the famous seasoned wings, and Fred Flintstone would dig the burgers – among the best in Beaufort.

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

Plums



904 Bay St. (843) 525-1946

www.plumsrestaurant.com

The restaurant's been a favorite among tourists and locals alike for two decades, which is like a century in restaurant years. When soft shell crabs are in season you've got a better chance of getting backstage at a Stone's show than scoring a porch seat for lunch. But like most waterfront establishments, Plums leads a double life – a Jekyll and Hyde life. Thursday through Saturday, after the dinner crowd clears out around 10 o'clock, tables and chairs disappear, amps and speakers materialize and shortly thereafter the musicians to which they are attached. Plum's offers a spectacular view of the park and the river. The bar's a great place to meet up for a quiet drink and a top notch nosh between lunch and dinner rush. With a recent extensive

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

renovation, Plums added a raw bar on the Bay Street side. Claim a stool and enjoy an icy pint with a dozen plump Apalachicola oysters on the half shucked to order right in front of you. It doesn't get much better.

Q on Bay

822 Bay Street (843) 524.7771

www.qonbay.com



The latest addition to the waterfront lineup is the river front bar at Q on Bay, formerly Kathleen's. As the name implies barbecue – all manner of it – is what's cooking at Q. We recently spotlighted the restaurant in the July 20th Backyard Tourist column excerpted here:

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

There's an instantaneous throwback sensibility to Q on Bay – a bit like stepping back into a bygone era, plucked from the past and newly polished for the present. Partners Jason Bailey and Chris Johnson had their work cut out for them during a long and arduous restoration process. The current renovation finally realizes the building's full potential with three distinctly different spaces and an atmosphere the partners characterize as "upscale rustic." The dining room off of Bay Street is relaxed, casual and family friendly while the patio offers plenty of covered outdoor seating on the waterfront park. And for those who recall the prior incarnation of the bar, well, things have changed a bit. Q features live music on the weekends (with an emphasis on acoustic) and sports all year 'round on the abundant flat screens.

Bailey and Johnson hope to make the bar a sports destination with the football season and we're betting on it. They've got the 'cue *and* the brew. Order up a mess of ribs or sliders and choose from 16 taps featuring a mix of staples, craft beers and microbrews all available by the pitcher. "You can't find that anywhere else downtown," says Johnson.

Saltus River Grill

802 Bay St. (843) 379-3474

www.saltusrivergrill.com

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, this is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma – only

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

with sushi and premium cocktails. The patio looks out on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway but it's designed to look like something out of California wine country. The bar and restaurant housed in this historic old Lowcountry building mimic Manhattan chic. Carrie Bradshaw and her posse would be right at home. In fact, more often than not the bar clientele at Saltus may be the best dressed bunch of drinkers this side of a Donatella Versace afterparty during Fashion Week. During the week the after hours business crowd mingles with golfers and Day "Frippers" in from the island. On the weekends this is where the Beautiful People gather to see and be seen, the heady scent of titanium credit cards sweet as magnolia blossom in the air. From 4:00-5:30 Sunday through Thursday take a seat at the bar and enjoy half price on all wines by the glass, mojitos and sushi.

PORT REPUBLIC TO CARTERET STREET

Emily's Restaurant and Tapas Bar

906 Port Republic St. (843) 522-1866

www.emilysrestaurantandtapasbar.com



Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

I'm on record as saying this is Beaufort's living room and I'll stand by that. The restaurant's been around for years, a longtime local favorite. A black baby grand piano sits in a corner. The restored antique bar is curiously shaped like a giant coat hanger. Ask owner Tommy Winburn to tell the tale of how he found it on E-bay. There's no happy hour but the price of cocktails drops once you set foot on Port Republic. The wines are terrific values either by the glass or by the bottle and there's a decent selection of bottled beers. In the mood for a nosh? The tapas menu is a packed two full pages. We're partial to the grilled Andouille sausage, the Lobster Ravioli and the Garlic Beef. The giant flatscreens make Emily's a great spot to meet friends and catch a game or just catch up. Stick around long enough and you're likely to end up as part of the family.

Nippy's Fish

310 West Street (843) 379-8555



Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

A sign in the window reads “Cold Beer In a Parking Lot.” Owner, Diana McGrath, says that kind of sums up the attitude – or lack of it. I couldn’t agree more except to add there’s plenty of shade, high powered fans and picnic tables. A throwback to the bygone Lowcountry tradition of the fish shack, Nippy’s is nothing fancy and therein lies the glory of the place. Two blocks off Bay Street, the small tabby building and adjacent lean-to offer an alternative reality at the edge of a pay-to-park lot beneath live oaks dripping in Spanish moss while horse drawn carriages clop past on Craven Street. Order up a frosty beverage and sample the award winning Fish & Chips (voted best in Beaufort), Fish Tacos or the fresh made local Shrimp Burger – a true Lowcountry delicacy. Nippy’s features live music Thursday and Friday nights and in every Saturday afternoon. Thursday evening the parking lot’s packed for the weekly “cornhole” tournament – a local phenomenon one must see to truly appreciate. Up to twenty-five teams have been known to compete. An acquaintance once called it “the most fun you can have in a parking lot with your clothes on. Dogs are always welcome, says Diana, and parking in the adjacent lot is a bargain – just a buck with a Nippy’s token.

Wren Bistro & Bar

210 Carteret Street (843) 524.9463



The vibe is a dramatic blend of ingredients and ideas that probably shouldn’t work together, but like a premium Sazerac, they go down easy. There’s plenty of exposed brick, steel, iron and tin mingling with marble, stone, wicker, wood and rope - yes, rope – and a splash of whimsy. Let’s call it Gothic Industrial Rustica.

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

There's plenty of room at the bar (although the funky wicker bar stools take a bit of getting used to) and cocktail seating features a long rustic bench beneath a massive picture window framing all the poor suckers stuck in bridge traffic out on Carteret. The wine list is compact and eclectic – no grocery store labels here. For the barley and hops crowd there's no shortage of adventurous choices like Abita's Purple Haze summer brew – a light lager infused with raspberry.

Owner/Chef, Anne Sergeant, tells us big changes could be in store for the bar (more of a cool lounge?). Indeed, the days of the wicker bar stools may be numbered. Stay tuned...

Breakwater Restaurant and Bar

203 Carteret St. (843) 379-0052

www.breakwatersc.com



On the subject of bar stools, Breakwater is watching out for your butt, so to speak.

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

All dedicated bar patrons know that the key to any successful watering hole is your own butt and what it's perched on. Co-owner Donna Lang picked out the plush leather seating personally. "If your customers aren't comfortable, they're not going to stick around," she says.

This is Breakwater 2.0 – two blocks and light years away from the old West Street version. "People tell us it's hip, sexy and modern," says Lang. "It's almost like being in New York, but without the attitude." The glassed enclosed Wine Room opposite the bar showcases a wall of wines from around the world – the most extensive cellar in Beaufort, nearly all of it available by the glass. The gold-flecked marble of the bar simply demands an Old Fashioned or a Bombay Sapphire Martini.

So with all this style, sophistication and leather the prices have to be pretty luxurious as well, right? Wrong. In fact some of the bar prices have been adjusted down and drinks are discounted during happy hour from 5 to 6:30. And just a few yards north of that swanky wall of wine a frosty pint of draft PBR – yes, Pabst Blue Ribbon – is two bucks all night long. And everything on the eclectic seasonal menu can be enjoyed at the bar. I highly recommend the Lamb Sliders, two mini lamb burgers served up in toasty home-made mini-buns with minted yogurt, feta cheese, a pickle and the kitchen's addictive hand cut fries. Dang, they're tasty.

UPTOWN/TOWN CENTER

Bricks On Boundary

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

1422 Boundary St. (843) 379-5232



www.eatatbricks.com

To borrow a line from Casablanca, “Everyone comes to Bricks” - in droves. The reasons are pretty simple: combine an upbeat, casual atmosphere (think Outback without all the Aussie affectations and better lighting) with equal parts sports bar and restaurant. Bingo. A friend recently described the menu as “comfort food with a kick” and that’s pretty close, but there is a sense of finesse that elevates something like a run-of-the-mill platter of nachos beyond the usual, generic bar grub to a recommendation. There’s a growing selection of interesting draft brews and all bottled beer is iced down as God originally intended. This is one of my top spots off the waterfront to watch sports, primarily because of the widescreen projection TV that essentially turns an entire wall of the bar into a sports theater. The bar staff is way ahead of what I’ll call the “regulars’ curve.” Here, everyone knows your name - in short order. All they need now is a guy named Norm.

Rosie O'Grady's

Boundary Street, in Beaufort Town Center

843.379.7676

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24



Frank Zappa once said you can't call yourself a country unless you have your own beer. Some nuclear weapons are good, too, but you really, really need a beer. I have a similar, yet more compact theory: no town is truly complete without a proper Irish pub. Michael Pressley of Rosie O'Grady's ("Mikey" to his regulars) is of a similar mind.

Rosie's is the kind of place you might stumble upon in Boston's Back Bay where you're on a first name basis with the bartender by the second pint and as long as you're not wearing a Yankees cap everything's cool. Pass the pretzels. There's a classic neighborhood vibe to the place and everything that comes out of the kitchen benefits from Mike's 28 years in high end resorts. The half-pound house burger (the Samuel L. Jackson Chili Cheeseburger from Hell!) comes loaded with Mike's lethal habanero sauce on the side. The faint of heart are urged to leave it there. The hot wings are more incendiary than Sarah Palin at a PETA rally - but in a good way. In fact, the menu is full of surprise and choice. The fish in the Rockville Fish & Chips Basket is grouper and comes with Mike's own pepper cream and creole tarter sauce. "We've got everything from a great ribeye steak to a pickled egg," says Mike. He's not kidding.

Rosie's has a few other things going for it. The eclectic collection of video games is old school and there's always action on the pool tables. Rosie's also features seasonal taps with daily and weekly drink and dinner specials. Check the Club Scene section for live entertainment and special events.

Beating the Heat in Beaufort

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 02 August 2011 14:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 September 2011 11:24

TO BE CONTINUED...

Coming soon the Life Behind Bars lowdown on the Seas Islands, Port Royal and South of the Broad.

Got a great watering hole? Email Mark Shaffer at backyardtourist@gmail.com and delve into the archives and check out our videos at www.lcweekly.com.

[Read more Life Behind Bars](#)