

guide to good dining

Restaurant Review:
Fisherman's Inn

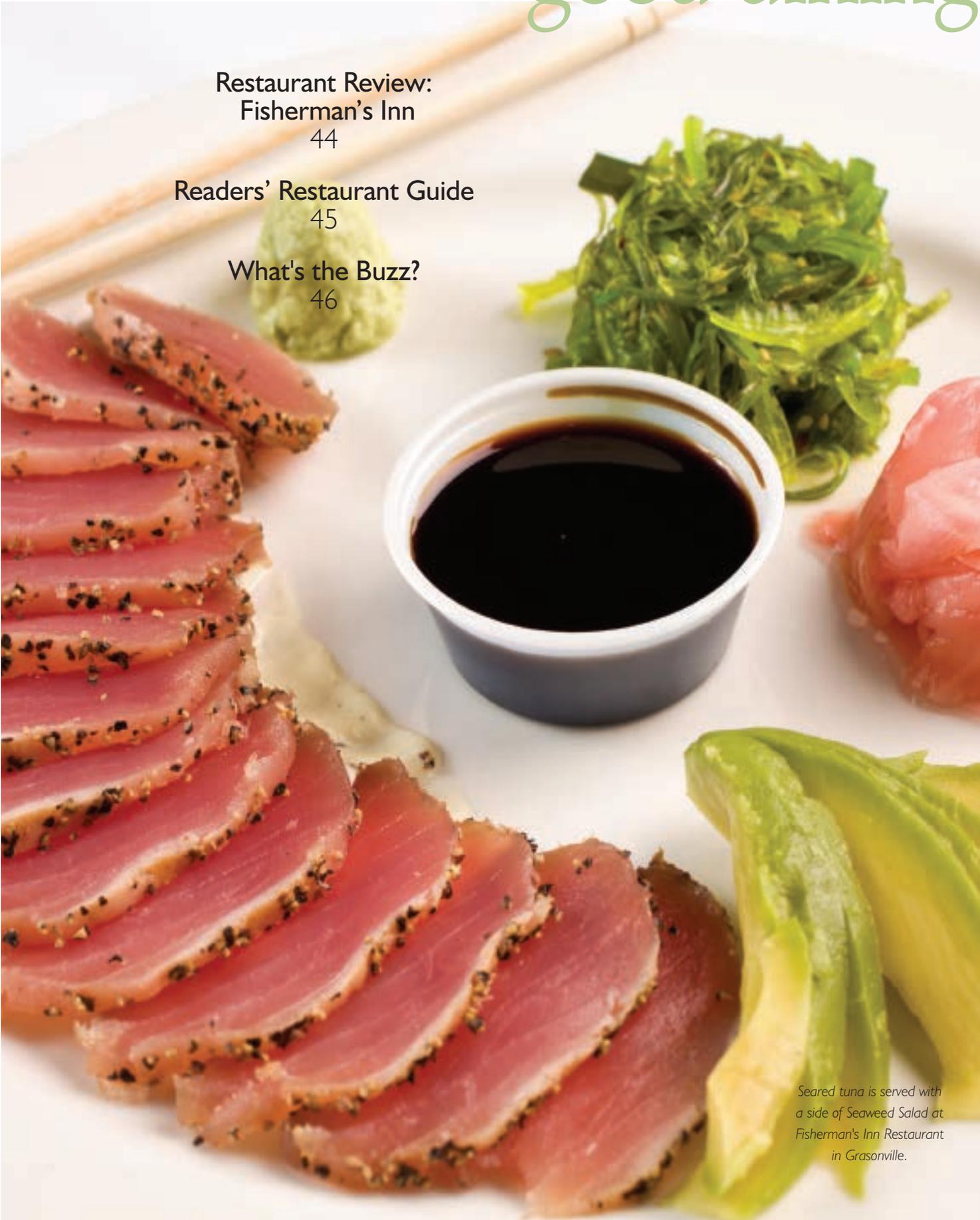
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A close-up photograph of a white plate featuring a variety of Japanese-style dishes. In the foreground, several slices of seared tuna are arranged in a fan shape, showing a pink interior and a browned, sesame-seed-crusted exterior. To the right, there is a mound of vibrant green seaweed salad. Below the tuna, a few slices of ripe avocado are visible. In the center, a small white ceramic cup is filled with dark soy sauce. A dollop of green wasabi sits to the left of the cup. In the background, a pair of light-colored wooden chopsticks rests on the plate. The overall lighting is bright and clean, highlighting the textures and colors of the food.

Seared tuna is served with a side of Seaweed Salad at Fisherman's Inn Restaurant in Grasonville.

guide to good dining



Left: The toasted garlic cheese bread soaks up the garlic herb broth served with Italian-Style Mussels.

Below: The Tidewater Rockfish is a new menu item, served with a layer of fried green tomatoes and topped with a mixture of corn, crabmeat, cream, and country ham.



Fisherman's Inn

3116 Main Street
Grasonville
410-827-8807
fishermansinn.com

Review by Doug and Christine O'Connor

Photos by Tony Lewis, Jr.

As one drives across the Route 50 Kent Narrows Bridge from the island to the Eastern Shore, there is an entire village of hospitality to the south side of the highway that has grown up over the past 80 years called Fisherman's Village.

The village includes Fisherman's Crab Deck, Fisherman's Seafood Market, Fisherman's Fishing Charters and Boat Cruises, and, of course, Fisherman's Inn. The entire village is built upon Eastern Shore history and tradition. We have a very good friend, Chef Paul Wernsdorfer, who has been working at Fisherman's Inn for more than 16 years. In the hopes that we and some friends, Mark and Barbie, could get a feel of the restaurant and a taste of the hospitality when Chef Paul wasn't there, we decided we would have dinner on one of the nights Paul had off.

Fisherman's Village has plenty of off-street parking, so when we pulled up at 6:30 on a weeknight, we had no problems finding a place to leave our car. We were greeted by a hostess who found us a table for four in front of one of the windows overlooking the beautiful landscaped Koi pond and garden. The restaurant has many huge windows that allow guests a view of the gardens, the Bay, and the sun setting over Kent Island. The main dining room seats approximately 190 guests, and on the night we were there it was

well over half full and looked to be running efficiently. Our waitress, Candy, greeted us promptly and took drink orders. Mark ordered a Tanquary & Tonic (\$5.25), Barbie ordered a Frozen Margarita (\$7), Christine decided a Mojito (\$7) sounded like a good choice, and Doug ordered his traditional Grey Goose Martini (\$7.50), up and with olives.

While we waited for our cocktails and admired the decor including the suspended, working model train that circulated above our heads, we checked out the extensive menu. The fare is overwhelmingly filled with Chesapeake Bay tradition with a gourmet twist.

Appetizers like Fried Oysters (\$11.99) and half-pound of Steamed Shrimp (\$9.99) are listed with Crab Pretzels (\$11.99), Seared Tataki Tuna served with Seaweed Salad (\$9.99), and Gorgonzola Cheese Skins topped with Gorgonzola Sauce and Applewood Bacon (\$7.99). The Inn also serves PEI Mussels (\$9.99) and soups by the cup and bowl.

Without going any further down the menu, we knew we would not go away hungry!

The dining room is decorated with antique oyster plates collected by Betty Thomas-Shultz, historic Oyster packing cans, and a trove of interesting Shore related pictures (many show the growth of Fisherman's Village from a single storefront to what it is today.) The main lighting fixtures are old-style ship hatch covers and pendant lanterns. Mark noticed our tabletop was imbedded with a navigational chart of the bay.

Our drinks arrived, and we placed an order for some appetizers. As a special of the day, the chef had made a batch of Butternut

Crab Bisque, taking advantage of a wonderful fall squash, so we ordered a bowl to sample (\$7). We also decided on a bowl of the Mussels Italian-style with tomatoes and roasted garlic broth and an order of Crab Melt "Mini Bites" (\$12.99).

When the appetizers arrived, we were just starting to feel hungry. The butternut and crab bisque came piping hot and a perfect way to begin a fall evening. This delicious concoction was robust in flavor and texture. The chunks of crabmeat were plentiful and a perfect complement to the butternut squash. We enjoyed the Crab Melt "Mini Bites." These little delights were served on thinly sliced sourdough bread. There was an ample amount of lump crabmeat placed upon the baguettes and sprinkled with provolone and fontina cheese. They were baked and served golden-brown. We also indulged in the mussels, which came with large pieces of toasted garlic cheese bread, perfect for soaking up the roasted garlic herb broth that was left in the bowl after we finished the hot plump bivalves.

For our dinner order, Dorothy decided that the single jumbo lump crabcake (\$19.99) was a good choice; after all, this is the Fisherman's Inn. Mark selected one of the new items on the menu, the Tidewater Rockfish (\$24.99). Christine opted for the Seafood Norfolk Sautee, a mix of scallops, large Gulf shrimp, and lump crabmeat sautéed in a white wine butter sauce (\$23.99). Doug selected a traditional Eastern Shore Platter of Fried Oysters, hand-shucked, batter-dipped, and fried to order (\$20.99). At this time we noted how busy it was in the restaurant. In spite of a poor economy, the locals know where to eat a wonderful meal.

Shortly after our appetizer dishes were cleared, our dinners arrived. Dorothy's crabcake was so large it required a quarter of her plate.

This was served with lettuce and a slice of tomato. A bowl of butternut squash with a hint of spice was served alongside of the crabcake. Christine savored each bite of her Seafood Norfolk Sautée. The trio of fresh-caught scallops, Gulf shrimp, and lump crabmeat were sautéed in a white wine and butter sauce. Each bite was so tasty, and the different flavors were also individual. Christine appreciated the light sauce that was not overwhelming or filling. Mark lingered over his Tidewater Rockfish. This is a new item on the menu and very appealing to the eye. There is a layer of fried green tomatoes buried beneath the pan-seared rockfish. On top of the rockfish is a blend of sweet corn, lump crabmeat, cream, and country ham. This was truly a seafood treat and highly recommended. Doug chose to go the traditional route, selecting the fried oysters served with French fries. These were tender, juicy morsels fried to a crunchy golden color.

All of the entrees include rolls and a choice of two sides (or one side and a salad). Dorothy and Mark both chose a house salad and butternut squash, Christine selected a side Caesar salad and fresh green beans, while Doug selected a Caesar salad and opted for French fries to go with his oysters. The house salad included loads of Romaine, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, shredded carrots, and homemade croutons. The Caesar salad was made of Romaine lettuce and an abundant amount of large parmesan cheese flakes and plenty of garlic in the dressing.

We saved a bit of room for dessert. It is made fresh each day, and we were introduced via a dessert tray. This way we were enabled to see and chose each delectable sensation. Mark enjoyed a Caramel Fudge Brownie (5.50), a rich, gooey dessert filled with decadence and flavor. Dorothy was tempted with the warm bread pudding (5.99). Sweet and slightly spicy, this was a perfect ending to the fall evening. Christine indulged in the Coconut Cream Pie (\$5.99), knowing that Doug would sample a bit. It was rich, filled with coconut, and oh-so creamy.



Chef Paul Wernsdorfer heads up the kitchen at Fishermans Inn, with Sous Chef Chris Roy by his side.

While we had dessert, we talked with Chris Roy, the sous chef. Chris told us that he has been working at Fisherman's for more than eight years. He and Chef Paul Wernsdorfer make a great team in the kitchen. They are both graduates of one of the nation's premier culinary colleges, Johnson & Wales University, located in Providence, R.I. They plan weekly specials, working hard to promote from-scratch cooking in everything they do. Chris told us that they try to give back to the community by hosting fundraising events for many charitable causes. Typically these happen during the off-season at the Crab Deck.

In economic times like these it is nice to know that there are still wonderful organizations like Fisherman's Inn who are willing to help good causes. Over the years Fisherman's has become a true Chesapeake Bay icon. ■

Doug O'Connor has 20-plus years of experience as an executive chef and a food and beverage director and is involved with the Chesapeake Chef's Association. He graduated from Johnson & Wales University with degrees in culinary arts and food service management. Christine graduated from Johnson & Wales with a degree in hospitality management. They currently reside in Cape St. Clare, Md., with their two children.

When to Enjoy: Daily: 11 a.m.-10 p.m.
Expect to Pay: Appetizers: \$8.99-16.99
 Light fare/Sandwiches: \$8.99-16.99
 Dinner entrees: \$17.99-38.99



Readers' Restaurant Guide!

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Advertisers are listed in red.



Waterfront



Reservations Accepted



Live Music



Kids' Menu



Full Bar



2009 Best of Winner

\$- Average price of entrees are under \$15

\$-\$- Average price of entrees are between \$15 and \$25

\$\$\$- Average price of entrée is over \$25

Talbot County

208 Talbot Restaurant
 208 Talbot St., St. Michaels
 410-745-3838 \$\$



Chef uses local and seasonal products to create exquisite dishes.

"The food is delicious for the very best go with a fresh fish entree." Peter Censky, Easton

Acapulco

201 Marlboro Ave., Easton
 410-763-9060 \$



Authentic Mexican fare.

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409 S. Talbot St., St. Michaels
 410-745-3081 \$\$



Savory gourmet pizzas, pastas, salads, & extensive wine list.

Bartlett Pear Inn

28 S. Harrison St., Easton
 410-770-3300 \$\$



Upscale American Bistro with French technique utilizing local products. Bar/Lounge, light fare cocktail menu.

Bay Hundred Restaurant & Tiki Bar

(Currently closed for winter)
 6178 Tilghman Island Rd., Tilghman
 410-886-2126



Fresh local seafood & hand cut beef
 "Great, fresh seafood. Super place to dine on the deck and watch the sun go down."
 Victoria D Braun, St. Michaels

Bella Luna

1216 S. Talbot St., St. Michaels
 410-745-6100 \$\$



Italian dishes made in-house & from scratch.

Bistro St. Michaels

403 S. Talbot St., St. Michaels
 410-745-9111 \$\$\$



French cuisine fused with traditional Eastern Shore items.

"The service is top notch and a great server who made sure that glasses remained filled. The bread was warm, and the dinner served in a timely fashion." Molly Blake, St. Michaels

Carpenter Street Saloon

113 Talbot St., St. Michaels
 410-745-5111 \$



Crabcakes, prime rib, pizza, & brunch items.

Chesapeake Landing Restaurant & Seafood Market

23713 St. Michaels Rd., St. Michaels
 410-745-9600 \$\$



Full menu of seafood & traditional American cuisine.

Darnell's Grill & Catering



22 N. Harrison St., Easton
 410-770-5534 \$
 Homemade Chesapeake favorites with a southern flair.

Easton Diner

8451 Ocean Gateway, Easton
 410-819-0535 \$



Local favorites & traditional comfort food for breakfast, lunch, & dinner.

Foxy's Marina Bar

125 Mulberry St., St. Michaels
 410-745-4340 \$\$



Outdoor dining offers grilled burgers, seafood, & more.

General Tanuki's Restaurant

25 Goldsborough St., Easton
 410-819-0707 \$\$



Fresh sushi & a diverse variety of menu items.

Grassini's Bridge Restaurant

6136 Tilghman Island Rd., Tilghman
 410-886-2929



Land and sea fare with an Italian twist.

Harrison's Chesapeake House County Inn

21551 Chesapeake House Dr., Tilghman
 410-886-2121 \$\$



"The service is top notch and a great server who made sure that glasses remained filled. Classic Eastern Shore fare.