



BEACHiN'

SUMMER 2022

**Blueberries. Bacon.
Shrimp. Sports.**

Baldwin County offers a variety
of explorations perfect for a
rainy or sunny...or hungry...day

PLUS: 7 (and 100) Things
that tell the story of coast
writer **John Mullen**

Hello, Summer!

From a list of public beach access points and menus
and coupons for local restaurants to calendars and
things to do, find resources and information inside

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GULF COAST MEDIA

about the cover



A dolphin surfaces to say hello off Bay La Launch in Orange Beach this summer. Getting on the water means a likely opportunity to see a variety of animals that call the Gulf home. Photo by Micah Green.



cover story

Go behind the scenes of a local shrimping excursion

34

contents



6

Spears

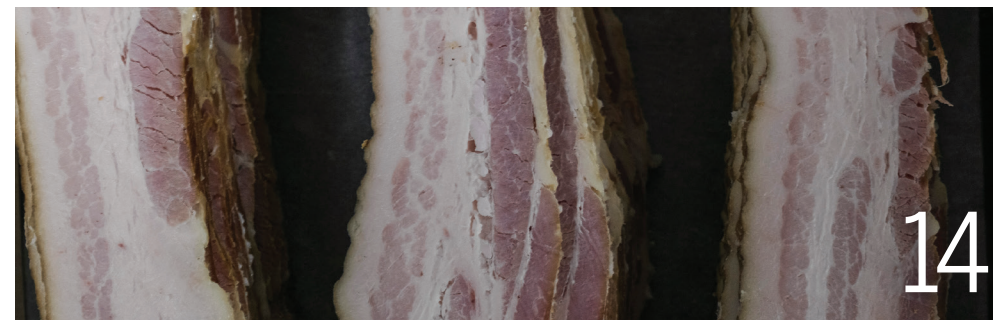
Get off the beaten path with a trip to Gene Morris' Spear Hunting Museum



9

Berries

Learn about U-Pick farms in Baldwin County and a special one that is all about family



14

Bill-E

William E. Stitt loves bacon. One taste at his restaurant and you will, too.



30

Mullen

A new Beachin' series that tells the story of a local person through 7 hand-selected items



39

Art

Learn about sports history through the lens of something just as universal: art.

THIS WASN'T IN THE BROCHURE!

A series exploring nearby places off the beaten path.

Spear Hunting Museum

Words by Allison Marlow

Photo by Micah Green

Odysseus had the Odyssey. Achilles, the Iliad. Gene Morris, the Spear Hunting Museum of Summerdale. It is the first and only spear hunting museum in the United States built by Morris, who crowned himself the "Greatest Spear Hunter in Recorded History."

While we can't confirm the title, we do know for certain that Morris' belief in himself was bigger than any game he hunted.

The retired U.S. Air Force colonel opened the homage to himself

in 2006. Inside you will find some of the weapons he used on his hunts and many of the animals that found themselves at the wrong end of his spear.

The museum lists 592 total big game kills for the late Morris, who died in 2011, a number that staffers claim is more than any human has recorded.

The species that fill the list include lions, cape buffalos, kudu, zebra, gemsbok, eland, wildebeest, blesbok and warthogs. Morris hunted in Alabama, Florida, Texas, Hawaii,

Argentina and Africa.

Visitors today won't have the luxury of a personal tour, once offered by the hunter himself, who spent many of his last years entertaining and recalling stories of his days on the prowl.

But you can still be inspired by the many quotes he left behind to help visitors embark upon their personal quest for greatness.

"If you can't win, change the rules. If you can't change the rules, then ignore them," Morris once said.

Seems like he certainly did.



TO FIND THE THE SPEAR HUNTING MUSEUM, take U.S. Hwy 59 from the beach to Summerdale. The museum will be on your right right before Davis Nursery. Admission is free, and the museum is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday and closed on weekends.

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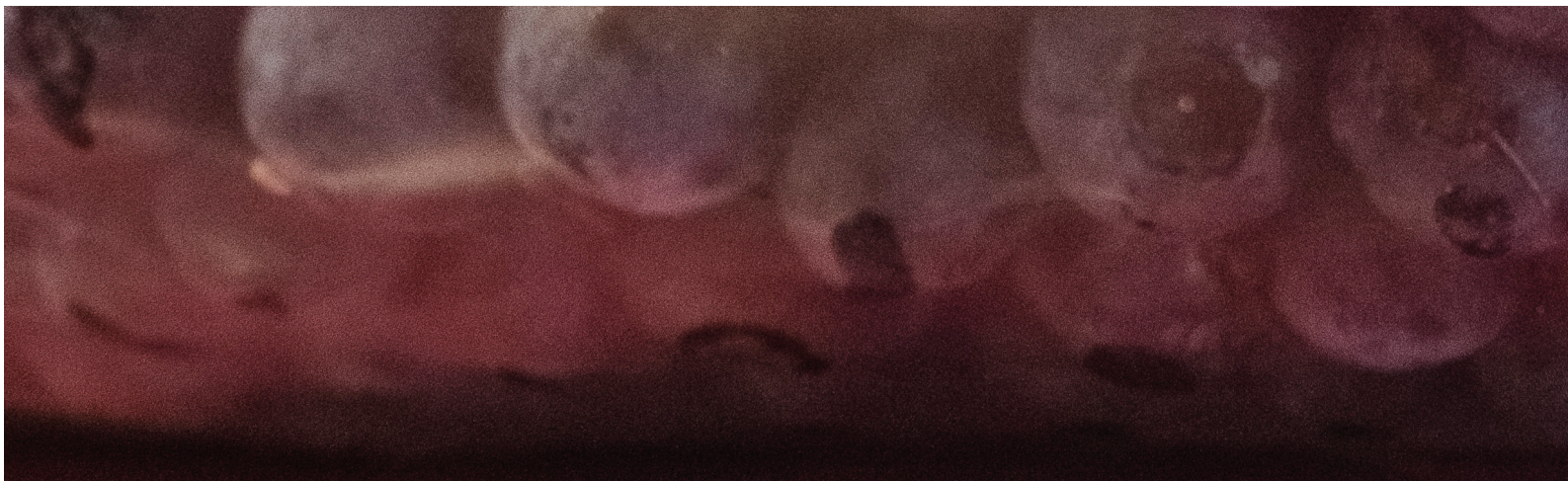
GULF COAST MEDIA

Find your berry bounty

U-Pick farms offer a tasty experience with fun for the family. At **Hillcrest Farms** and for its 94-year-old owner, family is what it's all about.

Words by Jessica Vaughn
Photos by Micah Green





As you drive along Highway 98 in Elberta, you'll come to an inconspicuous dirt road. Turn on Hillcrest Drive. Continue on until you see a handwritten sign with an arrow guiding you to one Baldwin County's hidden treasures: Hillcrest Farm.

After rumbling down the dirt road under a canopy of trees, sunshine breaks as you come around a curve to find yourself driving through a gauntlet of beautiful flowers.

The moment you park and step out of your car, you know you've found somewhere special.

Miles and miles of farmland spread out before you.

As you head to the farm's store, you'll find picnic tables waiting, the perfect place to sit down for a summertime (or anytime) chat. Chimes sing in the breeze. A friendly dog or two may just come out to say hello.

And no matter what time of year you visit, you're sure to find something delicious to bring home.

"Blueberry season will end during July, and then after that we'll have figs, but we'll pick those because the birds get them early in the morning before customers do. Following that is muscadine/scuppernong grapes, which the customers can pick, and that's followed by

"It becomes part of their life; school's out, blueberry season's here ... some of the customers I saw as toddlers 30 years ago are now here with their children."

persimmons. And then citrus comes in November. We have satsumas and grapefruit and plenty of kumquats," owner Laurel Hixson said.

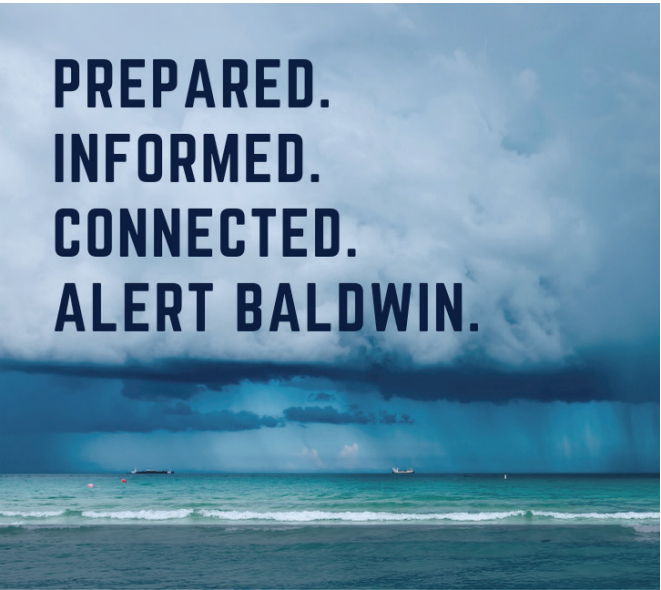
Hixson grew up in Ohio and moved to the area with her husband 42 years ago. She was 50 then. Today, the 94-year-old can't do quite everything she used to, but she still tends the farm with her son and daughter-in-law, a 14-hour-a-day gig. They're already preparing for the next crop by the time a season ends.

And blueberries, Hixson said, are one of the farm's most popular features.

"We have our share of customers, but the blueberries are a big attraction. Everybody likes them," she said. "Early in the morning, it's not really tough to pick them when it's cooler, but in the afternoon you've got to be devoted. During the season, we'll have people here 6:30, 7 o'clock in the morning."

Hillcrest Farm grows rabbiteye blueberries, a popular choice in the South. They grow well in the coastal climate, Hixson said, making them an attractive choice for local farmers.

"It's a species that's native to the coast," Hixson said. "If you pick something that's compatible with your



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climate, you have a head start."

When you arrive, grab a bucket before heading out into the fields. Each bucket is equipped with a plastic bag to fill with fresh berries. Once you're finished, simply remove the plastic bag, leave the bucket outside the store, and head inside to purchase your picks.

"We have a lot of people who come back every year," Hixson said. "It becomes part of their life; school's out, blueberry season's here. It's really fun because some of the customers I saw as toddlers 30 years ago are now here with their children. We're certainly always happy to see them return.

Some of these customers are practically family."

While U-Pick seasons vary throughout the year, the store is always open and sells fresh eggs, honey from the farm, approximately **30 types of homemade preserves and seasonal produce**. And, if you're lucky, you might find some blueberry jam later in the year. Hixson said she and her daughter-in-law make roughly 50 dozen blueberry jams for the season. According to her, while it may sound like a lot, that's not always the case.

But don't worry. Even if the blueberry jam has sold out, there's plenty of other

flavors to purchase – both traditional and bold.

"You don't normally find scuppernong or muscadine jelly," Hixson said, showing off the display of jellies she and her daughter-in-law make. "We have persimmon and peach, and peach with pecan, and blackberry. We have strawberry jalapeno and raspberry pear jalapeno, which have been received quite well. We try to have a variety. Something for everybody."



WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HILLCREST FARM?

Call: (251) 962-2500
Visit: 30497 Hixson Road, Elberta
Follow on Facebook: @hillcrestfarmalabama

MORE U-PICK PLACES Whether you're looking to fill up your freezer to last you through winter, grab some fresh fruit to use in recipes, or for some fresh handfuls to eat now, Baldwin County offers multiple U-Pick farms for blueberries and other seasonal produce. Check out the list below!

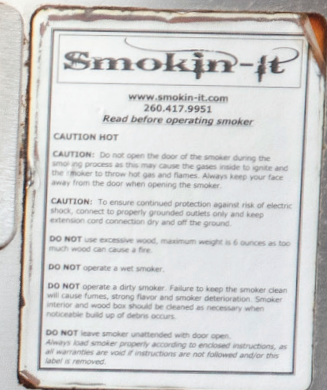
Baldwin Blueberries – 27608 County Road 65, Loxley, (251) 234-0444
Gardner's Berry Farm – 21909 County Road 68, Robertsdale, (251) 597-5456
Hillcrest Farm – 30497 Hixson Road, Elberta, (251) 962-2500
Meadowlark Farms – Check Facebook for directions.
Located off Mary Ann Beach Road and Dominion Drive in Fairhope, (256) 617-0467
Weeks Bay Plantation, 12562 Mary Ann Beach Road, Fairhope, (251) 263-2066



Baldwin's Baron of Bacon

Small batches, subtle ingredients
and moonlit serenades. A recipe
fit for the bacon king.

Words by Allison Marlow
Photos by Micah Green



As the Alabama sky turns pink, then crimson, and soon fades to stars, William E. Stitt retreats into the darkness.

A local band floats guitar riffs through the night air while Stitt fills it with the aroma of what might just be the world's best bacon. That is, according to local devotees whose burgers, breakfasts and lunchtime sandwiches will only be touched by that bacon which Stitt has crafted.

The process of smoking and curing, and often singing to the slabs of meat, is one that is akin to therapy, Stitt said. Hidden in the back of his namesake restaurant on Highway 181 in Fairhope, Stitt crafts a culinary masterpiece that has lured followers from across the nation to stop in for a burger topped with the juicy pink meat and been named one of the top three bacons in North America by myrecipes.com.





late at night in the back, singing and smoking his small batches of bacon.

Now, the bacon is what gives the restaurant its fame. Locals snap the hand-crafted slabs, wrapped in its signature brown paper, off grocery shelves. Stitt is the reigning bacon king, though the title comes not with a life of ease but rather the non-stop hustle of managing both the bacon business and the restaurant.

What makes Stitt's bacon not just better, but the winner of titles locally, regionally and nationally?

Stitt doesn't just make bacon. He massages and manages the process from the moment the bacon is born.

If you are lucky enough to meet Stitt, you might hear him say, "When Berkshire red pigs and Chantilly white pigs get together magic happens." That magic is the moment Bill-E's bacon is created.

Stitt buys his pork bellies from three farms in Southern Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota. There, the specific types of pigs he prefers are bred and raised without hormones or growth antibiotics. They are happy pigs, treated kindly and fed correctly.

Once he receives the pork bellies, the entire process is completed by hand, in small batches. Large bacon producers buy the meat in bulk and

It is a dream he has been chasing since childhood.

As a teen, Stitt and his brother, both Eagle Scouts, were taught to navigate life by their dad's simple philosophy: learn a little about everything. And they did. When the brothers showed an interest in a trade or topic, their dad found them an expert to learn from, gifting the boys a childhood of exploratory learning that Stitt calls "simply awesome."

Before they were sent to college, their father required them to learn a trade. Any trade. And make it something, he said. Something you love.

Stitt loves food, especially grilling steaks. His father found an old-school butcher in Yazoo County, Mississippi, deep in the heart of the coastal state. There, Stitt spent much of his senior year learning the art of butchering. Just before he headed to college, the man gave Stitt the secret to his success. He taught him to make bacon the way his granddaddy did before him.

Still, it would take three years, a lot of tinkering and a few lessons in hog breeding to make it perfect.

Stitt headed to Ole Miss after learning the secret of handmade bacon and became a chef, where he spent time researching bacon, later as a quality team member at Ruby Tuesday's improving the chain's bacon was always part of the conversation.

When he opened Bill-E's in 2011, formally known as Old 27 Grill, Stitt could often be found



How to be a responsible Beachgoer

- Keep a safe distance from marked or fenced areas where birds are nesting, and avoid making birds fly off.
- Keep the beach clean by using proper receptacles or carrying out trash.
- Keep dogs off all islands and Gulf-front beaches in Orange Beach
- Walk on wet sand (to avoid accidentally stepping on a nest outside of protected areas) and around flocks of birds.
- Please remember to never feed the birds.
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use machines to slice and press the strips and then spray them with liquid smoke.

Bill-E's bacon is crafted through a slower, more intentional process. It is cut by hand, seasoned by Stitt, cured for eight days and serenaded by the man himself for good measure.

The result is bacon that can serve as a center-plate of premium protein, much like a steak or cut of chicken.

"I always said, 'How can we use pork belly as the main dish?'" Stitt said. "I feel like that's where we landed. Some companies, their target is to have a specific spice or flavor, but when you have that sometimes you totally forget you are eating pork."

Stitt says diners need to "clear their mind of expectations" before they sit down to a serving of Bill-E's.

"My bacon is kind of hammy, in a positive way," he said. "It's hard to get crisp because it's a great piece of protein. It has the texture of ham and is thicker than most bacons."

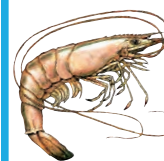
"This is going to be a totally different experience than any other bacon you get."

You can ask what he uses for flavor, but all he'll tell you is pink salt and brown sugar from the finest molasses in the South. The rest is a secret.

"I could tell you the exact portions of my curing ingredients," he said, "but then I'd have to eat you."

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French fries piled high with slow roasted pork, jalapeño, cilantro and raw onion, topped with cheese dip and sour cream. 9.99

CACTUS GUACAMOLE

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Sub steak* or grilled chicken + 2.99

TEXAS FAJITA NACHOS

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CHEESE & BEAN 8.49

CHEESE & BEEF 9.49

CHEESE & SHREDDED CHICKEN 9.99

CHEESE, BEEF & BEAN 8.99

QUESADILLAS

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Add rice and beans + 2.99
Top with cheese dip +2.25

SHRIMP QUESADILLA

Grilled shrimp served inside a flour tortilla with melted cheese. Served with lettuce, sour cream and tomatoes. 13.99

TEXAS FAJITA QUESADILLA

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GRILLED CHICKEN OR STEAK QUESADILLA

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FAJITA QUESADILLA

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CHEESE QUESADILLA 7.99

SHREDDED CHICKEN QUESADILLA 8.99

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Add rice and / or beans + 2.99

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Sub grilled steak* +2.49

*THESE ITEMS ARE COOKED TO ORDER: Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have a medical condition.

FAJITAS

A sizzling platter of bell peppers and onions with your choice of meat. All fajitas are served with lettuce, pico de gallo, sour cream, guacamole and choice of two (2) sides: Mexican rice, black beans, cactus grits or refried beans.

CHICKEN 14.99
SHRIMP 15.99
STEAK 16.99

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A grilled half pineapple stuffed with chicken, sautéed bell peppers and onion. 17.99 Substitute: Steak* + 3.00 Shrimp + 2.00.

TEXAS FAJITAS

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Add rice and/or beans +2.49
Top with cheese dip +1.99

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Burritos are served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, black or refried beans or cactus grits.

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TEA | DR PEPPER | SPRITE
BARQ'S ROOT BEER
LEMONADE | ORANGE FANTA
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TACOS

All taco entrees are served with your choice of two sides: Mexican rice, black beans, Cactus grits or refried beans. Tortilla choice of soft flour, soft corn or hard corn shell.

TEXAS TACOS

One steak* taco, one grilled chicken taco, one shrimp taco served with pico de gallo, lettuce and cheese. 15.99

TACOS MEXICANOS

Authentic Mexican-style street tacos with carne asada, fresh cilantro and onion on soft corn tortillas. Served with lime and verde sauce. TWO TACOS 12.99 THREE TACOS 14.99

NEW! CARNITAS TACOS

Authentic slow-roasted pork on soft corn tortillas with cilantro and raw onion, and a side of cilantro-lime cabbage and salsa verde. TWO TACOS 12.99 THREE TACOS 13.49

GRINGO TACOS

Juicy grilled chicken tacos with fresh grilled pineapple and chorizo. Topped with raw onion and cilantro. TWO TACOS 13.99 THREE TACOS 15.99

CACTUS TACOS

Seasoned ground beef or shredded chicken tacos with fresh pico de gallo, lettuce and cheese. TWO TACOS 12.49 THREE TACOS 13.49

TACOS DE POLLO

Juicy grilled chicken tacos with fresh pico de gallo, lettuce and cheese. TWO TACOS 13.99 THREE TACOS 14.99

STEAK TACOS

Grilled marinated steak* tacos with pico de gallo, lettuce and cheese. TWO TACOS 14.99 THREE TACOS 15.99

TRADITIONAL plates

Traditional plates are served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, black or refried beans or cactus grits

NEW! FLAUTAS

Three corn tortillas fried with your choice of shredded chicken, carnitas, or ground beef. Served with pico de gallo, lettuce, sour cream, and a side of cheese dip. 13.99

CACTUS BOWL

All bowls are served with Mexican rice, black beans, broccoli, pico de gallo, and choice of guacamole or sour cream. GRILLED CHICKEN 11.99 GRILLED STEAK 14.99 GRILLED SHRIMP 12.99 CARNITAS 12.99 VEGGIES 11.99

CHICKEN DIABLO

Grilled chicken cooked with our spicy cheese sauce. 14.99

POLLO CACTUS MELT

Chicken breast smothered in bell peppers, onions and our cheese sauce. 14.49

ARROZ CON POLLO

Grilled chicken served on a bed of rice topped with cheese dip. 10.99 (no sides)

ENCHILADA SUPREME

One shredded chicken, one beef and one cheese enchilada topped with lettuce, tomato and sour cream. 13.99

CARNITAS

Slow-simmered pork tips cooked with sautéed onions. Served with fresh tortillas, lettuce, guacamole, pico de gallo and sour cream. 14.99

CARNE ASADA

A grilled 9-oz skirt steak served on a sizzling bed of onions and bell peppers 15.99

TAQUITOS

Three corn tortillas fried with your choice of shredded chicken, carnitas, or ground beef. Served with pico de gallo, lettuce, sour cream and cheese dip. 13.99

CHIMICHANGA PLATE

A large flour tortilla stuffed with beef or shredded chicken, then lightly fried and topped with cheese dip. 12.99
Add steak* or grilled chicken +1.99

COMBOS

All combos are served with your choice of two sides: Mexican rice, black or refried beans or Cactus grits. Additional charges for steak*, grilled chicken or shrimp.

BURRITO - CHILE RELLENO

ENCHILADA - TAMALE

TACO - CHALUPA - TOSTADA

ANY ONE 10.49
ANY TWO 11.99
ANY THREE 13.99

*THESE ITEMS ARE COOKED TO ORDER: Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have a medical condition.

KIDS' MENU

For children 12 years and younger. Includes soft drink or tea (dine-in only). Add 2.00 for adults.

TACO

Chicken or beef taco served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, black beans, Cactus grits or refried beans. 6.99

ENCHILADA MEAL

Cheese, chicken or beef enchilada served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, beans, Cactus grits or fries. 6.99

MINI NACHOS

Choice of ground beef, shredded chicken or plain with cheese dip. 6.99

MINI QUESADILLAS

Kid-sized quesadillas stuffed with cheese and chicken or ground beef and served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, beans, Cactus grits or fries. 6.99

CACTUS MINI BURRITO

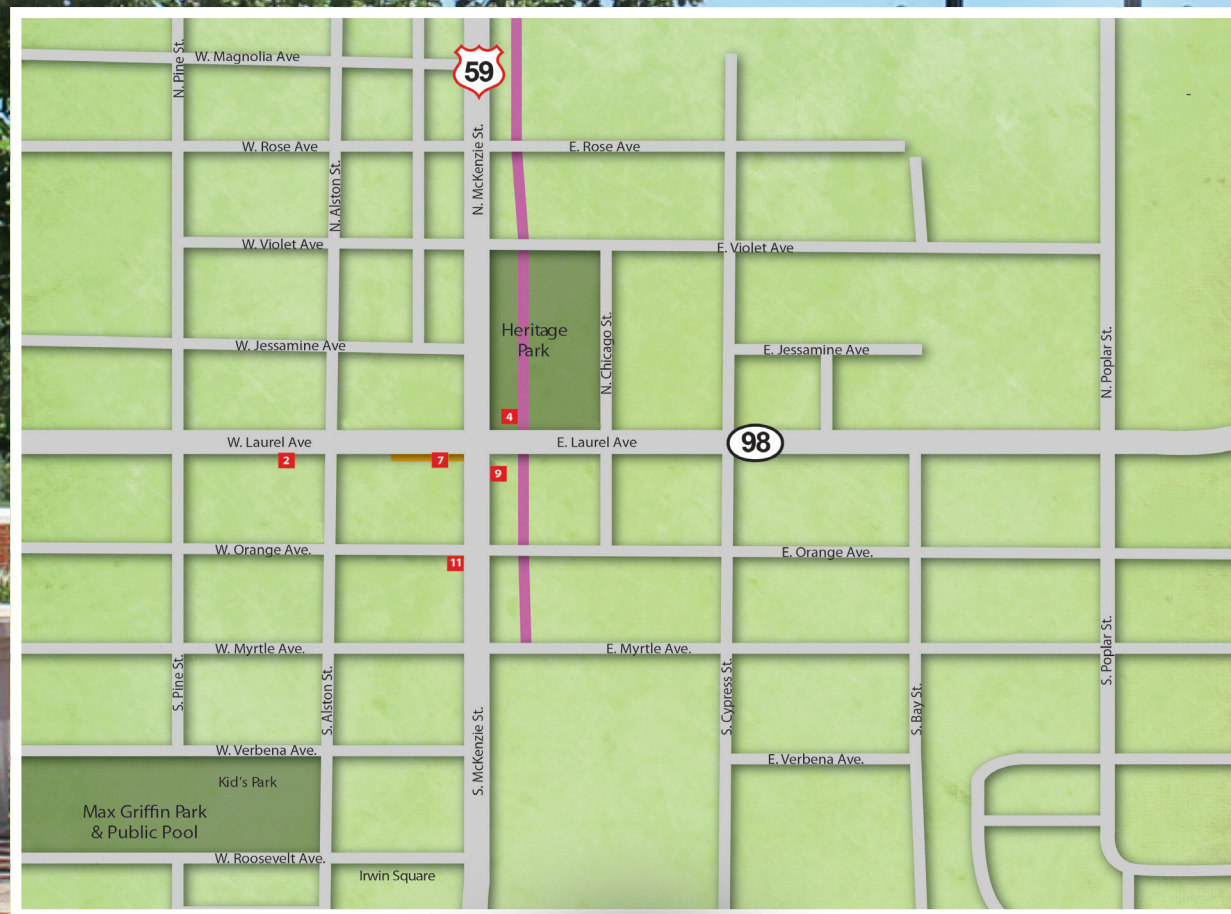
Beef or shredded chicken burrito served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, beans, Cactus grits or fries. 6.99 Substitute steak* or grilled chicken + 1.50

CACTUS FINGERS

Chicken fingers with fries. 6.99

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Alabama Point East-A Gulf State Park Beach Area is located 0.3 miles east of Perdido Pass Bridge and offers over 6,000 feet of wide beach in addition to sand dunes, boardwalks, picnic areas, restrooms and outdoor showers.

Cotton Bayou is located at the intersection of Highway 182 and Highway 161 between some of the area's most popular condominiums. There are restrooms and showers on site.

Romar Beach-A Gulf State Park Beach Area is located 6.8 miles east of Highway 59 and has a limited amount of free parking (no facilities).

Gulf State Park Pavilion is located six miles east of Highway 59 and offers a beach pavilion with air-conditioned restrooms, private showers, a snack bar, shady spots to sit and eat, plus a large fireplace for chilly days. There is a \$5 fee to park for four hours and \$10 to park all day, but there are plenty of spaces and a lot of room for large vehicles and RVs.

Gulf Place (Gulf Shores Main Public Beach) is located where Highway

59 ends. There are beach attendants, three open-air pavilions, a picnic area, restrooms and showers. Parking is \$5 for four hours and \$10 to park all day between March 1 and Nov. 30. Arrive early to get a prime spot in this popular hangout.

Gulf Shores 2nd Street Public Beach is just two blocks west of Highway 59. Facilities include an accessible restrooms, outdoor shower and covered pavilion with picnic tables.

Gulf Shores 4th Street Public Beach offers only pedestrian crossing beach access, perfect for those staying at nearby properties.

Gulf Shores 5th Street Public Beach is located five blocks west of Highway 59 with parking on the north side where the boardwalk leads to the beach. Parking is also available on the south side beside Bahama Bob's.

Gulf Shores 6th Street Public Beach is located six blocks west of Highway 59. Walk the boardwalk to the beach. Facilities include an outdoor shower and accessible restroom.

Gulf Shores 10th Street Public Beach offers beach access only with parking across the street. Facilities include restrooms and showers.

Gulf Shores 12th Street Public Beach offers beach access but no parking. Facilities include restrooms and showers.

Gulf Shores 13th Street Public Beach has street-side parking with a dune walkover. Facilities include restrooms and showers.

Lagoon Pass Beach is 2.9 miles west of Highway 59 and has restrooms, outdoor shower and a water fountain. Parking is \$5 for four hours and \$10 to park all day and is located on the northeast side of the Lee Callaway Bridge.

Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge Beach is located at 12295 State Highway 180 (Fort Morgan Road) in Gulf Shores. Park along Mobile Street for easy beach access. It is a wildlife refuge, so there are no facilities. There is a Refuge Office located nearby.



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Lunch Menu

HOME-STYLE LUNCH SPECIALS

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

Fried Shrimp - tail less
Blackened Catfish
Fried Catfish
Broiled Flounder
Fried Flounder
Grilled Chicken
Chicken Creole
Fried Chicken Tenders
Country Fried Steak
Hamburger Steak
Pork Chops
Country Ham
Vegetable Plate

SANDWICHES

(Served with french fries)

Complimentary Ice Tea and Bread Served
with All Dine in Lunch Entrees.
Add House or Substitute Salad for side dish
Po-Boy Sandwich
Cheeseburger
Crab Cake Po-Boy
*Monte Cristo Sandwich

SALADS

Dressings: Honey-Mustard, Ranch, Bleu
Cheese, Italian, Thousand Island, French,
Low-Fat Ranch, Raspberry Vinaigrette,
Balsamic Vinegar, Balsamic Vinaigrette,
Sesame Asian, Oil & Vinegar

Riviera Salad

- with pecan chicken tenders
- with chicken tenders
- with boiled shrimp
- with grilled or blackened chicken

Caesar Salad

- w/grilled or blackened chicken
- w/boiled shrimp

Gumbo & Salad - a cup of Seafood Gumbo
and our

Bisque & Salad

SEAFOOD FAVORITES

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

Add House or Caesar Salad
Substitute Salad for side dish
Fried Butterfly Shrimp
Fried Oysters
Fried Crab Claws
*Coconut Shrimp
Grilled Shrimp
Fried Seafood Platter

Broiled Seafood Platter

Stuffed Shrimp
Mahi-Mahi
Yellow-Fin Tuna
Tilapia
Grouper
Snow Crab Legs
Royal Reds - 3/4 lb.
Combo - 1/2 lb. Each
Crab Cakes - 2 cakes

PASTA

Fettuccini Alfredo

- w/grilled or blackened chicken
- with shrimp or crawfish

Basil Pesto Pasta

- with Roma Tomatoes
- with grilled chicken
- with shrimp

SIDE DISHES

Fried Green Tomatoes ~ Green Beans
Turnip Greens ~ Sweet Potato Casserole Corn
Fritters ~ French Fries
Mashed Potatoes w/Gravy ~ Fried Okra
Au Gratin Potatoes ~ Steamed Veggies
Kernel Corn ~ Yellow Rice
Black-Eyed Peas ~ Cole Slaw
Lima Beans ~ Macaroni & Cheese

Dinner Menu

STARTERS

Oysters on the Half Shell
1/2 dozen 1 dozen
Southern Style Crab Cakes
Crab, Spinach & Artichoke Dip
Coconut Shrimp
Stuffed Mushrooms
Alligator Bites
Fried Crab Claws

Tuna Dip 1/2 lb
Sweet Potato French Fry Basket 1 lb
Fried Green Tomatoes

GUMBO & SOUP

Seafood Gumbo cup
Crab & Shrimp Bisque bowl
cup
bowl

FRIED SEAFOOD FAVORITES

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

Butterfly Shrimp
Tail-less Shrimp
Bon Secour Oysters
Crab Claws
Fried Fish of the Day
Shrimp & Flounder
Shrimp & Oysters
Fried Catfish

SEAFOOD PLATTERS

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

Shrimp Lover's Platter
Fried Seafood Platter
Broiled Seafood Platter
Creole Platter
Caribbean Platter
Crab Platter

SEAFOOD SPECIALTIES

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

Stuffed Shrimp
Shrimp Scampi
Blackened Catfish
Coconut Shrimp
Grilled Shrimp
Shrimp Creole
Crawfish Etoufee
Crab Cake Dinner

STEAMED SEAFOOD

(Served with new potatoes & one side)

Snow Crab Legs - 2 lbs.
Royal Red Shrimp - 1 lb.
Combo - 1/2 pound Royal Reds & 1 pound
Snow Crab

TONIGHT'S CATCH

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

Choose from the following preparation styles:

Fried Catch
Blackened Catch
Grilled Catch
Broiled Catch

New Orleans Catch
Mediterranean Catch
Caribbean Catch
*Pecan Encrusted Catch
*Paneeed Catch

LAND LOVER'S FARE

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

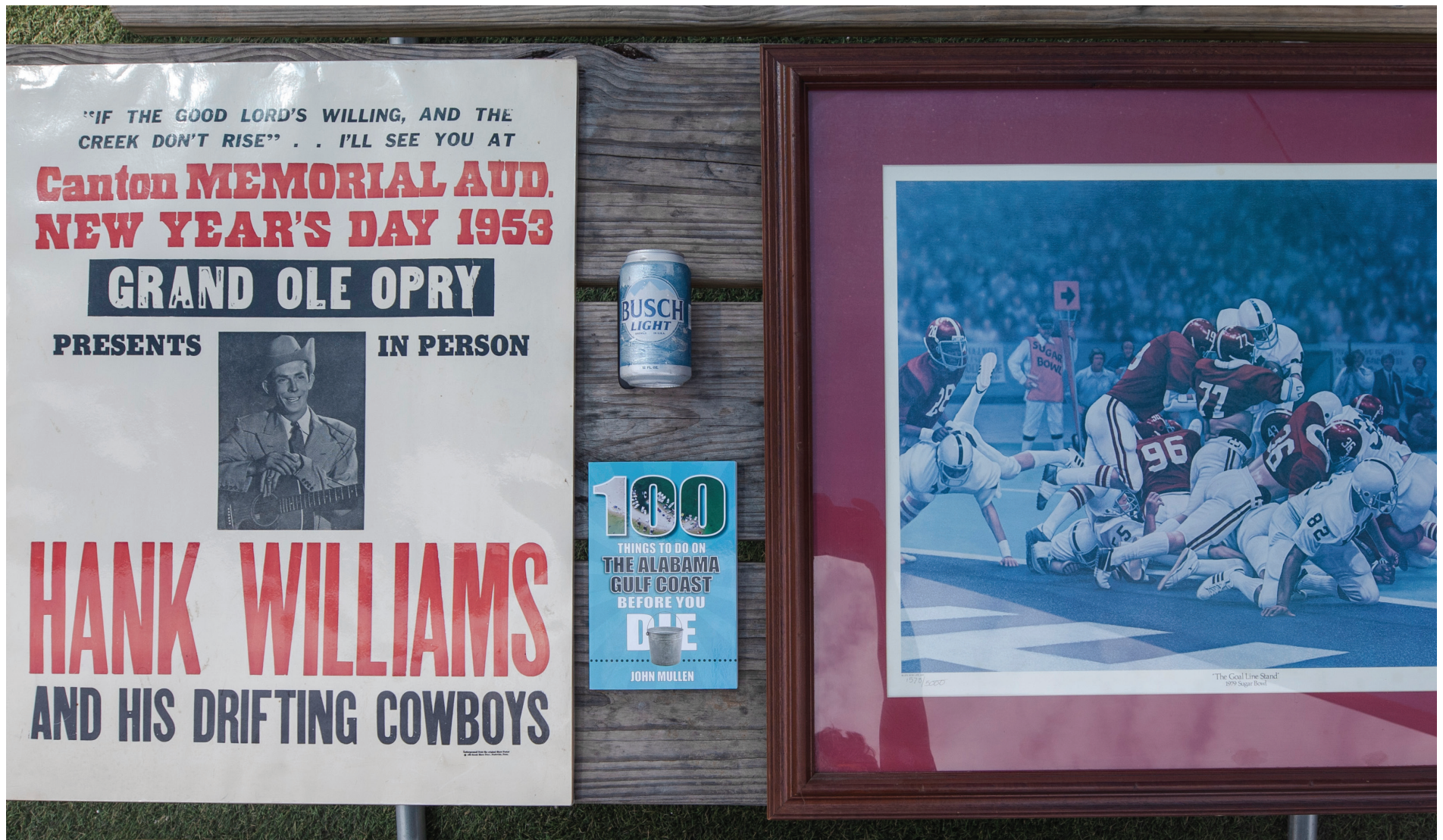
Hawaiian Rib-eye - (12 oz.)
- add jumbo grilled or fried shrimp
Jamaica-Jerk Chicken
Grilled Chicken Breasts
Fried Chicken Tenders

PASTA

Fettuccini Alfredo
- with grilled or blackened chicken
- with shrimp or crawfish
Scallops Alfredo
Shrimp & Pasta Marsala
Basil-Pesto Pasta
- with grilled chicken
- with shrimp

SIDE DISHES

Substitute House or Caesar Salad
for a Side Dish
Sweet Potato Casserole ~ Cole Slaw
Baked Potato ~ Steamed Vegetables
Yellow Rice ~ French Fries
Fried Green Tomatoes



7 THINGS

with
JOHN MULLEN

Words by Kayla Green
Photos by Micah Green

To the 8 million tourists who visited Baldwin County in 2021, to the tens of thousands of people who have moved to the Alabama Gulf Coast, Eastern Shore and inland suburbs in the last few years, 12 years is a lifetime. To the people who have called the area the only home they've known, 12 years is the blink of their eye.

Wherever you fall on that spectrum, you might think you've met someone here like John Mullen. He loves Alabama football, cheap beer and his grandkids. In no particular order. He loves music. He loves his dogs. He loves a good happy hour at a place where he's a regular at a time of the day "when I get tired of working."

You might think you've met someone like John Mullen. But you don't.

He's not into the trendy craft beer scene. It all pretty much tastes and does the same. He liked writing essays in grade school. Doesn't watch a lot of TV. He completed his first of two marathons in 1997, the Mullet Man Triathlon in 2009, the Big Beach Half Marathon last year. Still cries when he thinks about Molly, their second dog he and his wife lost since moving here 12 years ago.

His 12 years in Orange Beach can be seen as simultaneously the blink of an eye and a lifetime. Depends who you ask. But wherever you fall on that spectrum, you'll probably learn a thing or two about the area in his new book, 100 Things to Do on the Alabama Gulf Coast Before You Die. In the book, he's your guide for any kind of Gulf Coast experience that suits your mood.



In this new series, we are your guide to a different local person each time. Learn something new about an iconic community member or get introduced to a newcomer or someone behind the scenes. All told through seven objects (or people, places, ideas – it's up to them) of their choosing. In no particular order.

1. ALABAMA FOOTBALL

John was born in August 1961, the year Alabama won its first national title under Coach Bear Bryant. Coincidence? Maybe. Fate? Absolutely. "I would be a fan whether or not I was also a graduate, but I did go to school there to earn my journalism degree. Everything stops when 'Bama plays, even if it's against Western Kentucky."

2. NOT SEVEN, BUT 100 THINGS

His journalism degree came in handy. John has worked for newspapers in Alabama since 1983, serving as a sportswriter, copy editor, page designer, reporter and photographer. Six of those years were spent as editor of The Islander for us, Gulf Coast Media. "People say, 'What a great idea. How'd you come up with it?' It was a bold out of the blue – in an email."



Bottom three photos courtesy of John Mullen

A coworker forwarded a message from Reedy Press about making a book; “they do these books about cities and regions all over the country and some internationally as well. ... I thought, ‘I can work on this every day ‘til happy hour starts.’ And now we got a book.”

It’s more than a bucket list. It’s itineraries and insider tips. A local’s perspective. It’s an exploration of the resort towns of Orange Beach and Gulf Shores, of the vibrant culinary scene from burger joints to seafood shacks. It’s a guide to boardwalks over wetlands, to Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. It’s adult spring break at the Flora-Bama’s Mullet Toss, a glass-blowing demonstration at the Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach, Civil War history lesson at Fort Morgan, maritime viewing tanks, Shell Island excursions, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, snorkeling above reefs, alligators, bobcats, red-snapper fishing, sugar-white sand beaches, a sunken coastal freighter and Cajun-influenced must-eats. “Visit ReedyPress.com and get-cha one.”

3. GOLF CART HAPPY HOUR

100 Things was something he could work on “every day ‘til happy hour starts” over a few months. Happy hour starts “when I get tired of working.” He stayed at Gulf State Park one trip in 2004 when the kids were almost but not

quite grown, and his wife told him they’d find “the place we’re going to retire to” while they were down from Huntsville. It was the first he’d heard the idea. Since then, “we have a group of pals, and Jackie Cole and I text and have a few beers a few times a week, mostly at Oso at Bear Point, which also has fantastic music. Henry Bateman, the general manager, has been bringing the best bands to the islands in the 12 years I’ve been around formerly at Happy Harbor and now at Oso.”

4. COLD BEER

No happy hour is complete without one. Or a couple. And the cheap stuff. “People say if you go sit at a bar and John Mullen’s there, then whatever he’s drinking is the cheapest thing they’ve got.” PBR. Miller High Life. Busch Lite. Natty Lite. “Beer is beer.”

5. HANK WILLIAMS – MUSIC

When he’s listening to music at happy hour, he’s probably still listening to music. Unless he’s writing. Then it’s headphones and sunflower seeds. “I have music playing nearly constantly, and it’s a heavy rotation of Hank and Alison Krauss, my two favorites of all time. But tossed in are some people who played locally and regionally, from Cowboy Johnson to the Gravy Flavored Kisses who are no longer

together.” The Hank Williams poster is not an original, but he bought a couple after it was remade from the “show he didn’t make it to.” “I listen to anything from Roy Acuff to Jimi Hendrix to Ernst Tubb to the Ramones.”

6. THE DOGS

Also found often in close vicinity are the dogs. Every dog has someone who’s their person. The one they wag to see. The one to whom they run. “I’m Della’s person. She’s the only dog out of five we’ve had as a family who I’m the person. I love them all, and we currently also have Lucy and Perry, and since moving here we lost our very first family pup, Chef, at 14 in 2013 and lost Molly in 2017. We inherited her from our son, Johnny, in March 2017. I still cry when I think about Molly.”

7. THE GRANDKIDS

There’re also people who are your person. His (grown) children tell them they know they ask for help with the grandkids too much, but both John and his wife say, “that’s not possible.” They have 3-year-olds Ruby and Penny as well as two “grandchildren of the heart,” Jesi, 13, who is deaf and was adopted by his youngest son’s wife before they married, and Jackson, 10, who is his oldest son’s stepson who has been in the family since he was 3.



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A high-angle, first-person perspective shot from the deck of a white boat. In the foreground, the back of a person's head wearing a light blue and white striped baseball cap is visible. To the left, a man in a white long-sleeved shirt and a dark baseball cap is pulling on a rope. In the center, a man with a beard and sunglasses, wearing an orange beanie and a dark blue tank top, is also pulling on a rope. To the right, another person wearing a light blue baseball cap is visible, also holding a rope. Several thick black ropes extend from the boat into the dark, choppy water. The sun is reflecting off the water's surface, creating bright, shimmering patterns. The boat's white hull and some equipment are visible in the lower left.

Shrimping the bay

One writer's family outing
turns into a story...again

Words by Melanie LeCroy
Photos by Micah Green

I did not have the privilege of growing up on the Gulf Coast, or any coast for that matter. The nearest and largest body of water was the mighty Ohio River with its swift currents and questionable cleanliness. The only time I had the honor of seeing the salt water was the rare family trip to Virginia Beach. During college, I moved to Virginia Beach one summer to work, fell in love with the beach life and stayed for five years.

My husband grew up on the water, summering as a beach lifeguard and surfing every hurricane from Nags Head to Virginia Beach before we got married. He helped deepen my love for the beach life and showed me the joy of spending the day out on the salty seas.

When you live around the beach or on the water, you can sometimes lose its excitement and wonder. When this happens, I find it beneficial to see it all from a new perspective, to look at life through a new lens. Maybe through the eyes of a child or a visitor from a landlocked city. Their joy and amazement have a way of rubbing off on you.

Recently, my family got the honor of an invite from longtime Gulf Shores resident Chris Litton to go shrimping. My 16-year-old son, Liam, loves fishing and boating but was nevertheless not thrilled and felt his mother had lost her mind. He asked several times if I knew what I was

getting myself in to. My remaining family members were in for the chance of dolphin sightings.

Litton has been taking friends shrimping for years for the pure pleasure of showing them something new. While he holds a professional shrimping license, he does it all from his 20-foot personal watercraft. Armed with a 16-foot net, Litton took us out into the waterways of Orange Beach to teach us all a lesson in shrimping.

The adventure began at The Launch at ICW in Orange Beach where he put his boat into the water just before 5 p.m. The most excruciating heat of the day was past, but it was still hot. A light breeze kept the air moving enough to make it bearable.

From The Launch, we headed down the Intracoastal Waterway toward Bear Point, also in Orange Beach. The water was calm and made for a perfect boating evening. Once we reached our undisclosed shrimping grounds, the guest became Litton's crew as jobs were handed out with detailed instruction. Liam, who holds a boating license, served as Litton's driver when setting the net, my husband, Mike, and Litton were on the net, I worked a line, and Luci, my 11-year-old daughter, kept track of the catch bucket. Micah, our photographer, tried to stay out of the way and not get his cameras wet.

The space on the center console of the



In Alabama, residents can obtain a **recreational shrimping license** that allows the holder to take **5 gallons** of shrimp with heads intact per day in areas open to commercial shrimping, and the net **must not exceed 16 feet**. A **commercial license** gives the holder **unlimited catch and a net over 16 feet**. For more information on the licensing and regulations, visit outdooralabama.com.



boat was tight, but everyone got the hang of where they needed to be to accomplish their given task. We'd hang in the bow (most forward part of the boat) to stay out of the way when needed.

After the net was settled on the bottom, a bevy of wildlife joined us. Seagulls circled like we had Cheetos on the beach; pelicans followed quietly, waiting for a free snack, and dolphins appeared out of nowhere. The dolphins were so close you could hear them blow air. Litton joked they were so close you could smell the fish on their breath.

Boats near us took note of the dolphin and quickly joined the parade for a free show. We even saw two other personal watercraft pulling shrimp nets.

The boat slowly moved through the water, pulling the net across the bottom. Litton took time to explain every step and answer our questions. He also pointed out the areas we were boating through and gave a history lesson along the way.

Once we reached the 30-minute mark, Litton called out instructions as the crew – we – readied to pull in the net. As the net emerged from the water, Litton shook off catfish and crabs. The net pooled onto the deck of the boat as we all held our breath, hoping for a good haul.

Litton released the end of the net, and the contents fell into the bucket. Shrimp, crabs, baby mullet and a bevy of bait fish were the reward for all the arduous work. Then, large metal bowls were filled with scoops of catch to sort by each. As we tossed the bycatch, the seagulls dove after the fish, squawking the hole time. The pelicans swooped down and took up residence next to the boat in the hopes of beating the seagulls to dinner. The dolphins surrounded the boat and swam with us as we moved through the water. Luci and I noticed the dolphins only snagged the bait fish that hit the water. They didn't want any of the tiny crabs.

It is important to note that there are

rules and regulations people must follow when fishing, crabbing, shrimping and hunting. Proper licensing is No. 1. It is illegal to feed dolphins, and violations come with a hefty \$5,000 fine. It is also illegal to keep the baby flounder and undersized crabs. Tossing the unwanted fish, undersized crabs and flounder back into the water is called picking your bycatch.

Everyone got back to their posts and readied the net for a second pull. Litton started, and one of our dolphin friends swam upside down under the net as if saying hello. Clearly the dolphins love the operation.

Litton contacted Capt. Dean to let him know where we were shrimping and when the net would come up. When it was nearing time, two of The Fun Boat dolphin cruise boats joined us. Litton talked to the guests on board about what we were doing and what we were catching. The deckhands on each boat handed our crew a net, and it will be filled with a variety of fish

from our catch. Litton explained again to the larger crowd that it is illegal to feed the dolphins.

The boats hung around as we each picked through our metal bowls full of catch. Each time we found something interesting, we showed it to the guests. We also threw the bycatch into the water, and our animal guests darted through the murky waters to snag our cast offs.

As the dolphin cruise boats departed, Litton asked us if we wanted to make one last pull. We all looked around as the sun was setting and the air had finally reached a pleasant temperature and said no. Instead, I asked if we could head back very slowly so we could enjoy the views.

Everyone finished picking the catch, and the shrimp were dumped into bags and placed in a cooler. The net was settled into the rear of the boat, and hands were rinsed of fish scales and stinky seafood slime.

Instead of heading straight back to The Launch, Litton took us on a ride through the calm evening waters. We ventured into a bayou, and Litton explained where we were (I believe close to Josephine). The skies turned pink and orange as we headed back. After passing all the homes on the water in Orange Beach and once we saw The Wharf, we knew the ride was over.

Once the boat was settled onto the trailer and our catch secured into coolers for each to take home, we bid farewell and many thanks to our captain and friend. It is a rare occurrence that both my children enjoy a family outing equally. This was one of them. Everyone had the time of their life despite being hot and sweaty, working hard for a few hours and smelling of fish. It was nice to look at my home from a new perspective.



THE ART OF SPORT

Rainy day? On your way to or from the beach? Take this daytrip to Daphne to explore a hidden gem that holds the world's largest collection of sport art.

Words by Kayla Green
Photos by Micah Green

It's a striking collection of junk-turned-art that you nevertheless might drive right past on your way to the beach or your daily commute. Up close, they're larger than life with detail you can't see from the car, detail found in the steel, gears and junk assembled into body parts and skin. A drop of water hanging from the metal swimmer's nose. Cleats poking out of shoes wrought from iron. Cyclists, gymnasts, a sprinter with a wheel as a head and bike chains as legs, Michael Jordan with his flagpole legs that have to be strapped down during storms.

Bruce Larsen's sculptures are the first glimpse to the American Sport Art Museum and Archives, an expansive collection of all media, from paintings to prints,

posters and photography, assemblages, calligraphy and caricatures. Pins and books. The sculpted bust of Nick Saban. The more than 1,800-piece collection, which has been growing and evolving since 1984 and now is housed in the architecturally acclaimed main campus building of the United States Sports Academy in Daphne, is thought to be the largest of sport art in the world.

If you're walking the grounds, you can also find the largest public art offering in the state, a two-story mural by Maestro Cristóbal Gabarrón, "A Tribute to the Human Spirit." The left-handed Jackie Robinson has become a landmark on the Eastern Shore.



Outside, Fairhope artist Larsen’s work is sprinkled across the grounds. Round the corner, and you’ll see yet another world-famous athlete pieced together with items you’d easily find in your grandfather’s garage. Gymnast Nastia Liukin, swimmer Mark Spitz and sprinter Valeriv Borzov beckon you inside to see what else this place has in store.



Inside, the pieces go beyond one local artist’s representation of sport.

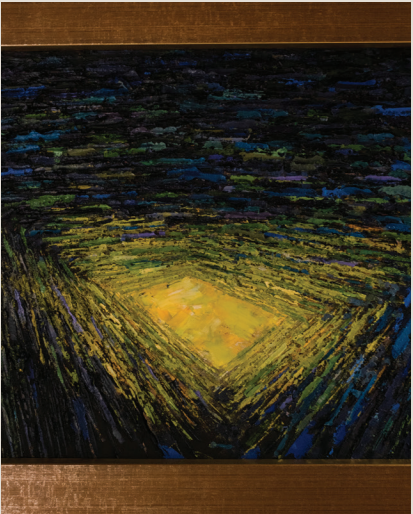
The collection was solidified when Thomas P. Rosandich started the Sports Artist of the Year Award. First presented in 1984, the award is given to an artist who is perceived to capture the “spirit of sport, so that future generations can relive the drama and excitement of today’s competitions.”

Sitting atop the gallery is every Atlanta Falcons fan’s still-living nightmare. Behold Brian Fox’s painted rendition of Tom Brady in throwing position. The score, 28-3. Fox was named Sports Artist of the Year for 2021 along with sculptor Sergey Eylanbekov.

The main gallery also features multiple pieces from Rick Rush. His depictions of famous moments in sports history, of plays and people, led to his successful landmark legal defense of painting Tiger Woods’ likeness without permission. Despite being out-resourced by the famous golfer, who sued Rush, the painter defended his work as a form of free speech. The courts ruled in his favor, and the case set precedent for the First Amendment protection of an artist’s right to depict historical events.



Along the walls are endless opportunities to view a new medium, take in an artist’s representation of a different sport or time in history. Olympic campaigns come in the form of posters and prints, pins and watercolors, medals, stamps, coins, plates, seals, books. Artifacts span Athens to Beijing.



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Art comes in many forms, and that is no lost upon the walls of the American Sport Museum and Archives.

A fighter painted with such detail you’d think it’s alive from the world of Harry Potter. His face sticks out from under a towel. Lights illuminates his body, but only parts of it. The parts an angled light would naturally touch. A caricature of a golfer painted onto the tops of tees. Everything from the Looney Tunes arms of a basketball player to the impossibly realistic sculptures detailing every muscle in the back of an athlete.

Whether you’re interested in large-format polaroid prints or sports depictions inspired by Normal Rockwell, you’ll find something you that strikes your eye. The collection is universal yet unique. Each item tells its own story yet is another chapter.

“Everyone recognizes sport. Everyone recognizes art.”





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ALL AMERICAN | 12

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BISCUITS, GRAVY & EGGS | 11

two biscuits topped with two fried eggs covered with sausage gravy

BREAKFAST BURRITO | 8

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Pancakes

BLUEBERRY | 12

CHOCOLATE CHIP | 12

BANANA PECAN | 12

PLAIN | 10

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fresh spinach, portabella mushroom, sliced tomatoes, poached eggs, hollandaise sauce, fresh herbs on a toasted English muffin

CAJUN | 16

conecuh sausage, 2 poached eggs, on an english muffin, topped with crawfish queso

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Served Daily 7am - Close

Sandwiches

served with slaw and choice french fries, sweet potato fries, chips, and onion rings

HAMBURGER | 14

8oz patty, choice of cheese, on a buttered toasted bun

TERIYAKI CHICKEN BREAST | 14

bacon & swiss cheese on a toasted ciabatta roll dressed & served with honey mustard sauce

BUFFALO CHICKEN | 14

fried chicken tenders coated with a spicy buffalo sauce. Served dressed on a toasted bun with a rancho bleu or swiss cheese dressing

REUBEN | 14

corn beef, swiss cheese, sauerkraut & thousand island dressing on grilled rye

TURKEY FLATBREAD | 14

turkey, swiss, spinach with a pesto sauce

SHRIMP POBOY OR WRAP | 15

remoulade sauce, dressed on a warm cuban hogie

MAHI POBOY OR WRAP | 16

fried, grilled or blackened

Platters

SHRIMP PLATTER OR FISH PLATTER | 16

grilled, fried or blackened, corn fritters, coleslaw & choice of side

CHICKEN TENDERS PLATTER | 14

SEAFOOD COMBO | 19

mahi, shrimp, grilled, fried or blackened with choice of side

Salads

Choice of Ranch, Caesar, Bleu Cheese, Italian, Honey Mustard, Apple Cider Vinaigrette & Balsamic Vinaigrette

CRAISIN SALAD | 9

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