

# JB's FISH CAMP & RESTAURANT —New Smyrna Beach



## The Catch of the Day

By Cindy Lowe

PHOTO BY BETTY KOPP

It could very likely be the catch of your day at the beach: that is, taking victuals at JB's.

"My restaurant is dedicated to the finest seafood available. Quality is the motto. Our river produces the sweetest seafood anywhere," states the menu in a quote from owner Captain John A. Bollman, III—also known as J.B.

Manager Betty O'Kula concurs. "Everything we get, we get from right out there," she says, indicating the local waters. Daily, they receive fresh crabs and oysters, shrimp brought in by off-shore shrimp boats, farm-raised gator and more. The restaurant's diverse menu gives a variety of choices to the diner and plentiful servings to the table. "Some of the bigger restaurants don't have half of this (selection)," O'Kula boasts. The entire menu of seafood, sandwiches, steaks and chicken is served throughout the day.

Come early to get a seat—the informal waterside cafe fills up with folks eager for a good meal, at noon or night. Come as you are and enjoy casual eating in this rustic, screened-porch atmosphere. A delightful breeze blows off the river where natural, unblemished Florida flora abounds. Egrets and herons perform graceful aerial ballets against the dusky sunset.

JB's cluttered eclectic decor is entertaining and fun to visually explore. The open rafter beams support a collection of old surfboards, stacks of eight-track tapes, magazines, beat-up shoes and a pair of ice skates hanging from a nail. Not only are the waitresses attentive, but other eyes are watching—whimsical taxidermic trophies populate the place. A good-ol'-boy alligator stands at the door to greet folks with a "hey y'all!" wave of his claw. A wild boar's head

with a cap cocked jauntily on one ear has a toy crab in his mouth. Picnic tables are covered with brown butcher-paper 'tablecloths' with each new group of diners. A roll of paper-towel napkins serves each table for those buttery crab leg adventures, and fresh paper plates come with each course during the meal.

Start with an appetizer, such as a bowl of outstandingly delicious jumbo stuffed mushrooms (\$4.50). Stuffed with a crab meat mixture and topped with mozzarella cheese and a dash of sherry, each bite is a mouth-watering taste sensation.

The Fish Imperial is another of JB's highly recommended recipes. The fresh and tender broiled grouper is covered with a sweet crab meat imperial sauce. Served with Cajun rice and an ear of corn, it is a true delight (\$16.95). O'Kula says JB's is one of the few restaurants which use 100 percent, real, \$20-a-pound crab meat. "People from Maryland come up and say, 'Good crab meat!'" she added jubilantly. Another delicious delicacy is the coconut fried jumbo shrimp (\$14.95). Sweet and tropical, these very large, deveined shrimp are truly a treat.

The full-flavored blackened grouper (\$13.50) and the blackened shrimp (\$14.50) are super spicy with JB's own blend of Louisiana seasonings. The grouper is considerably milder and quite enjoyable for those with tender taste buds. Both are served with Cajun rice and corn, tossed salad or creamy, homemade coleslaw.

All of the seafood is tender and moist and prepared with pride by chef Johan Van Nieuwland, originally of Rotterdam, Holland. He is a superior cook with a friendly personality and an anxious-to-please attitude.

Top off this dining delight with a slice of creamy-smooth, cool and tangy key lime pie (\$3.00), made from scratch by Shelly Whaley, or try Whaley's own recipe for Florida orange pie (\$3.00). Both are prepared in a tender, flaky crust.

This taste-of-real-Florida restaurant began humbly in 1979 as an oyster bar. Through the years, the menu and the building have expanded.

JB's has become very popular among the locals and those frequenting the area who own condominiums in Bethune Beach. "We get everybody!" says six-year veteran waitress Sue Rich. She notes that many come straight from the beach. "They come in their bathing suits. You don't have to change."

Weather permitting, outdoor live entertainment can be heard on Friday and Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons.

Beer, wine and other alcoholic drinks are served at the table or bar. However, families with young children are quite comfortable in this genuine, down-home, old Florida atmosphere.

The menu includes items popular with children. Crayons are also provided so small children can entertain themselves by drawing on the paper table coverings.

So, next time you're feeling a little crabby, come on over to JB's, where something a little fishy is always going on.

JB's Fish Camp and Restaurant is located on A1A, about eight miles south of the State Road 44 bridge at New Smyrna Beach. Look for the giant blue crab. Call JB's at (904) 427-5747, or write Box 1404, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32170 for more information. 