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## FOOD

### 'It's just gorgeous': New steakhouse opens on Captiva with over-the-top dining and views



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Crow's Nest Steakhouse made its breathtaking debut July 6 on Captiva.

It rests atop the recently opened Shipyard at Tween Waters Island Resort & Spa.

"Sunset up there is unbelievable," said Kim McGonnell, food and beverage operations manager for Sanibel Captiva Beach Resorts. "It's just gorgeous with unparalleled views of the Gulf."

Billed as the island's "only second-level destination dining experience with Gulf front vistas," the small, intimate space with a speakeasy feel is as stunning inside as the views looking out.

"It's so light and bright and brand new," McGonnell said. "There are floor-to-ceiling windows. Guests come in through the casual Shipyard, hit the second landing and pop up to see the tilework, the gold hues, accents and the bar itself. It's beautiful."

That bar, nestled beneath a suspended platform, seats 17. The 11 tables scattered around the dining room hold between two to six guests each, keeping the Crow's Nest to 60 people maximum at any given time.



Crow's Nest Steakhouse has stunning views of the Gulf. *Milissa Sprecher Photography*

"It's like a small private dining room," McGonnell said. "Almost like a private second floor. It supports upscale fine dining perfectly. We actually pulled a few tables back. It's almost a little exclusive. There's a two-hour turn time on tables."

### Steaks, wild game, quail on the menu

The menu is as lush as you would expect.

Served under glass in a cloud of light smoke, Smoked on the Water features scallops, Maine lobster meat and sushi-grade tuna with three sauces. Oxtail ravioli, Kennebec truffle frits, and chef-selected and freshly shucked oysters on the half shell are starters and that's just the beginning.

"Our goal is to have the Smoked on the Water served tableside," McGonnell said. "We are working on the logistics and doing some creative things."

Smoke is infused into the Smoke on the Water starter at Crow's Nest Steakhouse on Captiva. Meanwhile, the smoked old fashioned and Caesar salad for two are prepared tableside.

"The Caesar is fun," McGonnell said. "It's made like you would at home with 10 or so different ingredients."

Main dishes include cornbread and Chorizo stuffed quail, lobster tail, Ahi tuna steak, braised lamb shank and hand-cut prime steaks and in-house 30-day dry-aged steaks.

"The dry-aged in-house steaks are popular," McGonnell said. "So is the T-bone. It's beautiful. And the always available ribeye and New York strip."

Wild game is also a staple on the menu.

"It's braised antelope this week," McGonnell said. "It's the first time seeing it on a menu for a lot of people. It's a limited quantity. The wild game will change weekly, in five-day increments probably."

Mixed greens, soups and sides round out the menu which includes several vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free options.

### A whiskey lover's dream

The cocktail list is also impressive with more than 50 brands of whiskey, including aged in-house Shipyard whiskey, Kentucky bourbons, rye whiskeys, U.S. bourbons and global imports. Caribbean and South American rums are available, along with bottled and draft beer, mixed drinks, Champagne, and red and white reserve wines in addition to the regular wine list.

"The tableside old fashioned, the red peddled margarita with bourbon-barrel aged tequila and the French 75 with rose and jasmine gin and Champagne have been the top drinks so far," McGonnell said.

Whether it's for the food, drinks or spectacular views, a good mix of locals and guests staying on property have kept the Crow's Nest busy.



The bar at Crow's Nest Steakhouse is intimate, modern and stunning. *Milissa Sprecher Photography*

"Right now we have three menus coming out of one kitchen," said McGonnell, referring to Old Captiva House and The Shipyard, the property's other restaurants. "It's such a challenge here with the kitchen being downstairs. But we've gotten creative with it. The dumbwaiter system is amazing because the plates are very heavy."

### Reservations and resort attire suggested

Reservations are strongly encouraged. With limited seating and hours (it's open from 5-10 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday), it can fill up quickly.

"We will do walk-ins," McGonnell said. "And there's open seating at the bar based on availability. We've gotten a fantastic reception so far. People are coming in for special occasions. Old Captiva House is a special occasion place, but this is next level."

And as such, it's suggested that customers dress accordingly in resort attire.

"It's such an interesting dynamic," McGonnell said. "If there are 40 people upstairs when the sun sets, they all have that in common. They all kind of just pause. We want that slow, relaxed environment. So far, so good. Everyone seems to be enjoying it."

"We haven't had a steakhouse on the island in a long time. We are unbelievably lucky. Our locals are out in full force supporting us and everyone else who opens on the islands. It's another sign of a return to normalcy and people are excited."

*Crow's Nest Steakhouse, 15951 Captiva Drive, Captiva, at Tween Waters Island Resort & Spa; open 5-10 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday; reservations through Open Table; resort attire requested; access through Shipyard's entrance; (239) 472-5161 (ext. 420); crowsnest-captiva.com; follow on Facebook*