

# DRYDOCK

SEAFOOD GRILL & SPIRITS

## HARD TO FIND, BUT WORTH IT!

BY ALLYSON JONES • PHOTOS BY ROB KAUFMAN



"So, where do the locals go?" This question is asked countless times a day by visitors looking for the best places to eat, drink and be merry on Hilton Head.

Generally off the beaten path and found by word-of-mouth, homegrown favorites offer a place to unwind with good food, cold drinks and an inviting atmosphere. It's no accident that the DryDock Seafood, Grill & Spirits, tucked away in the Sapelo Building on Office Park Road, has all of these ingredients.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, owner Rob Arbogast began his long career in the hospitality industry at the tender age of 12.

A family friend owned a boardwalk stand in Ocean City, New Jersey, and Rob spent a summer bussing tables and picking up recyclable bottles on the beach. While a student at Villanova University, he was "The Cheese Steak Guy" at The Corner, a campus sandwich shop and pizza place affectionately known as "The Crotch."

Later, he ran a TGI Friday's in Fort

Lauderdale before heading up to Hilton Head Island in 1981 to open the Player's Club Restaurant. Now a fitness center, he met wife Vickie at this local hotspot in 1993, right before it closed. Hired to develop and manage the original Boathouse and Marker 13 in 1987, Rob also spent a decade running fishing charters on his boat, The Sassy Lady. Tired of working for other people, he decided to open the DryDock in 1994.

"Hard to find, but worth it," this Island institution moved to its current,

yet still well-hidden, location near Park Plaza in 2009.

Thanks to favorable online reviews and an emphasis on "fresh seafood, cold drinks and good times," the DryDock kept its strong local following, while attracting a new crowd eager to try something different.

As business took off, Vickie left her 25-year career in the mortgage industry to manage the restaurant. Overseeing the longtime staff, the Charleston native now spends her days waiting tables, wrangling wayward children, taking reservations and to-go orders, booking groups and providing directions.

Open daily for lunch and dinner, patrons can enjoy reasonably priced, made-to-order dishes while seated on the outdoor deck, in the cozy, nautical-themed main dining room or in the private, 20-seat party room. Sports fans can claim a spot at the spacious indoor bar and lounge area to catch the game on one of several flat screen TVs or head to the outside bar. A large aquarium, shuffleboard table and assorted video games provide plenty of entertainment for the kids before or after their meal.

In the kitchen, Chef Al Howard stays busy preparing the extensive menu of fresh seafood specialties and upscale tavern fare.

Lucky 7 Lunch Combo Specials are available from 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. with a selection of seven signature sandwiches, such as smoked BBQ, Philly cheese steak or grilled chicken, as well as garden salads and seafood baskets accompanied by homemade dressings and sauces. Pattied by hand, the Certified Black Angus hamburgers are considered by many to be the Island's best, especially when topped with Rob's own ketchup.

From an array of appetizers, soups and salads to sandwiches, pizza toppings and entrees, seafood is the star of the show at the DryDock.

Starters include She Crab Soup and Lowcountry Fisherman's Stew, plus Hot Shot Shrimp, bacon-wrapped



blackened scallops, fried calamari and garden or Caesar salads topped with grilled, seared, fried or blackened ahi tuna, shrimp, grouper, scallops, mahi mahi or chicken.

The Fish & Chips basket with hand-breaded grouper is always a top seller or try a shrimp, oyster or clam Po' Boy served on a hoagie roll with a side of tartar sauce.

For heartier appetites, the DryDock Steampot includes a cluster of snow crab legs, two Jonah crab claws, mussels, clams, shrimp, smoked sausage, corn on the cob and coleslaw for less than \$25. Make it a double and share the platter for under \$45.

Can't decide? The Fin Fish and Shellfish Dinner offers a choice of grouper, mahi mahi, yellowfin tuna, shrimp, oysters or scallops prepared broiled, grilled, seared, blackened, Caribbean jerk or fried. On the other hand, the DryDock Fried Seafood Platter includes shrimp, scallops, oysters, clams and grouper served with coleslaw, hushpuppies and French fries. Bar pizzas, Grover's Fries topped with blue and feta cheese, crumbled bacon and balsamic reduction, Stockyard Dinners of smoked BBQ baby-back ribs and hand-cut NY strip steaks round out the diverse menu offerings.

"Hilton Head's Home" for the

University of Michigan Wolverines (thanks to Turtle, the bartender), as well as the Miami Dolphins, the Philadelphia Phillies and the New York Yankees, Rob is quick to note that if you're spending money in his place, he'll find the game you want to see.

Happy Hour deals are offered from 4-7 p.m. and the DryDock is the perfect place to watch March Madness, Major League Baseball, professional golf and other sporting events, indoors or out.

The outside deck is a huge draw when the weather is nice and you'll want to make plans to attend the annual St. Patty's Day bash featuring Rob's famed corned beef and cabbage accompanied by live music.

Groups, both large and small, are always welcome at the DryDock. Call (843) 842-9775 for reservations and directions to the Sapelo Building at 21 Office Park Road. To view the menu or a detailed map, go online to [thedrydockhiltonhead.com](http://thedrydockhiltonhead.com) or visit their Facebook page.

Owner and operator of many successful restaurants, when asked about his plans for the future, Rob just laughs and replies, "I figure after 19 years, I've made the right choice."

So you want to know where the locals go? If you can find the DryDock, you've found the place. **T**