

# A First-Class Cafe on the Bay

Peter Holliday

There's something about sitting outside, on the water, that stimulates the appetite.

At Cafe on the Bay there is the additional stimulation of elegant, tasteful decor in this lush, fresh-air setting. Combine this with professional, friendly service, and you have the potential for a truly first-class dining experience.

**Critic's Choice:** Empress Sea Bass (\$25.95) completes the fine dining equation. It is a full-sized fish that is nailed to a rough-cut Florida cedar plank.

The fish is liberally seasoned with chef's secret blend of exotic herbs and spices mixed into a delicate breadcrumb mixture. The fish is baked and beautifully garnished with fried leeks before being served with capers and a light dusting of citrus zest. I enjoyed mine with the lemon butter. You'll enjoy yours.

**Bob's Choice** (my 5-year-old): The Vegetarian Napoleon (\$17.95) has no "yucky dead animals in it."

He loved the stratified veggie layers of grilled eggplant, bell pepper, zucchini, portobello mushroom and



Photos by Ed Luiso

firm, soft rounds of fresh polenta. The Napoleon was drenched in a deliciously smoky, creamed tomato sauce. Bob politely asked for more of the sauce and was quickly accommodated.

**Critic's Appetizer Choice:** The Bay Crab Cake (\$9.95) is my personal pick as a Florida seafood original. For those Chesapeake Bay area lovers who hink theirs is the only crab cake, give this one a try. It's made from local blue crab meat that is gently seasoned and blended with locally grown mild peppers. The generously-sized cakes are crusted with cashew dust, then sautéed in butter and



extra virgin olive oil. Add chef's home-made jalapeno/lime mayonnaise for a most unique approach. The flavors attack your palate on several levels. This Cafe on

the Bay crab cake is one of the world's best.

*Peter Holliday has written about food since 1987. Holliday's book "The Good, the Bad, and the Pretentious" is a guidebook to the top 200 Sarasota area restaurants. It will be in bookstores soon.*

## Cafe On The Bay

**Location:** 2630 Harbourside Drive, Longboat Key, at the Longboat Key Moorings inland from Intracoastal Waterway Marker 15. Docking is available for Cafe on the Bay customers' watercraft while dining at the Cafe.

**Dress:** You'll see a lot of very well-dressed people at the Cafe. I strongly recommend your best casual wear as a minimum effort.

**Reservations & Information:** The number to call is (941) 383-0440 or fax to 383-0822. Ask for Ken Parsons. He's the top guy, but never too busy to help with such matters as reservations or general information. I also recommend you access their Web site at [www.cafeonthebay.com](http://www.cafeonthebay.com).

**Hours:** Lunch is 11 a.m.-3 p.m. and dinner is 5-9 p.m. (10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays). Sunday brunch is 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

**Spirits:** A spectacularly well-stocked, full-service bar is available for your every beverage need. Talented service personnel will cheerfully go the extra mile to guarantee that your most decadent wish is fulfilled.

**Payment:** Most plastic works at the Cafe on the Bay (ie. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, Diners Club, Carte Blanche and virtually all travelers checks).

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