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Yacht Club serves up
gourmet cuisine

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Pan seared Wahoo with corn cakes, jicama slaw, mango jalapeno jam and a cilantro green goddess sauce. [DAVID TUCKER]



A taste of **DAYTONA BEACH**

*Halifax River Yacht Club serves up
gourmet cuisine with a side of history*

STORY BY KELLIE ABERNETHY + PHOTOS BY DAVID TUCKER

Perhaps the best way to get to know a community is through your taste buds. And if you want to get to know the community of Daytona Beach, the best way might just be through the menu at Halifax River Yacht Club.

The menu is a direct reflection of the palette of the Club's members. Each dish is reviewed by the house committee and members continuously submit their thoughts on dishes and suggestions on new dishes via comment cards. One look at the menu and you'll see a glimpse of local taste profiles – a coastal influence in the seafood chowder, traditional tastes in the double cut pork chop, and a vacation vibe in the Hawaiian style salmon.

The creative mind bringing the taste palette of HRYC to life is Gary Hoffman, executive chef. Hoffman was a chef for 27 years in Orlando until Brian Smith, general manager of HRYC, sought him out.



The pan seared duck breast with sweet potato gnocchi, duck confit ramps, poached egg and blackberry au jus. [DAVID TUCKER]



Pan seared Wahoo with corn cakes, jicama slaw, mango jalapeno jam with a cilantro green goddess sauce. [DAVID TUCKER]





The Hawaiian style salmon features a char-grilled salmon with a coconut pineapple beurre blanc served over jasmine rice and with buttered baby carrots. [KELLIE ABERNETHY]

“I knew immediately I wanted Gary,” said Smith, who had been a fan of Hoffman’s for years and jumped at the chance to pursue Hoffman when the opportunity arose.

With his arrival Hoffman brought his French training, which largely translates to a love of cooking with butter and cream.

“I’m classically French trained, so

I love butter and cream – stuff that no one cooks with anymore,” said Hoffman with a smile.

But like Julia Childs, Hoffman understands that butter and cream are the essential for flavorful, full-bodied dishes. But he doesn’t rely solely on butter and cream to carry his dishes. Hoffman is passionate about flavor and has a knack for pairing spices.

Traditional, but with an exotic flair, the Hawaiian style salmon is a perfect example. A char-grilled salmon filet with coconut pineapple beurre blanc served with jasmine rice and buttered baby carrots, this dish delicately balances savory French cuisine with the tropical notes a destination town demands.

Dishes like these continue to surprise and delight members, said

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Executive Chef Gary Hoffman seasons the pan seared Wahoo as sous chef Wayne Shaller works in the background. [DAVID TUCKER]

Deanna Piros, membership director.

“Because of the addition of our new chef we have seen return members, and new members as a result of the high quality of our food. The reviews are in everyday; the comment cards, we get them all the time — our food has become phenomenal,” said Piros.

Of course, the view doesn’t hurt either.

As the name indicates, the Halifax River Yacht Club sits directly on the Halifax River. As guests dine, boats come and go and stately Yachts and boats sit quietly in the slips below. Across from the Club sits City Island, home to Jackie Robinson Memorial Field where the local minor league team, the Daytona Tortugas, play in the spring and summer.

The Club claimed this spot back in 1896 when local townsmen

built a pier with a small clubhouse at the end. The little club at the end of the pier became quite the prominent place to be in the early 1900s. The inventor of Ivory soap, James Gamble, was a member and President-elect Warren Harding visited in 1921 before taking office.

In 2007 the Club ushered in a new era of history. A new building was built in the same location of the original, but the charm and character remain, thanks largely to the fact that members had a direct hand in designing and building the new Club.

Architect and Yacht Club member Larry Robinson designed the \$5.6 million building and 2018 Rear Commodore Mike Underwood was one of the contractors who built it.

“So many people who were instrumental of this facility are members, and that’s what makes us unique. It wasn’t built by an outside

contractor who we will never see again — members helped put this facility together,” said Smith.

Rich wood and hues of navy blue compliment the interior, exuding a nautical, old-world feel reminiscent of the early days of the club. A Hall of History on the first floor features photos of the building from 1896 and beyond, documenting each expansion of the original structure like a proud parent would display school pictures.

The amount of pride, and respect, for the Club’s history is evident.

Perched on the edge of downtown, the Halifax River Yacht Club has stood the test of time, proving to be a landmark in the city that has grown up around it. If history is any indication, the Halifax River Yacht Club is poised to remain a reflection of Daytona Beach and its members for decades to come.





The Halifax River Yacht Club in 1897. At right, the club in 1902. [IMAGES REPRODUCED BY MYCOAST]



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