

dining

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ECHO ECHO ECHO

New St. Simons restaurant showing up on locals’ radar

By **Judy Wells**
For the Times-Union

There are new looks and new tastes at the venerable King and Prince Beach & Golf Resort on St. Simons Island. The indoor pool in the lobby is gone and so is — gasp — the signature Friday night seafood buffet. In its place is an airy, inviting lobby and a new restaurant and bar, Echo, both focused on the expansive ocean views.

It is, in fact, the island’s only restaurant with an ocean view.

An institution on St. Simons since opening as a private beachfront dance club in 1935, the King and Prince has evolved over the years. The hotel opened in 1941, then closed as the Navy took it over during World War II and used it as the officers’ training center for radar, at the time a top-secret weapon.

After that, the entrance was shifted, new wings of rooms and villas were added. In addition, nearby houses and cottages were bought as well as the golf course at the island’s north end.

Nothing, however, has caught the locals’ attention as much as the elimination of that seafood buffet and replacing the indoor pool with Echo.

While area charities regret the loss of a favorite donation — certificates

for \$50 per person for the Friday buffet for two were a popular silent auction item — others have added Echo to their list of favorite spots for cocktails and dining.

“In the last year, I’ve tried hard to bring local people back in here,” said James Flack, chef de cuisine. “Since we opened — officially March 1 of this year — 70 percent of our customers have been locals.”

Cap Fendig, whose family has lived and worked on the island since the 1800s, is one of those locals.

“My wife and I have gone there several times,” Fendig said. “We really enjoy it.”

A ship’s captain with generations of seamen before him, he prefers his fresh fish and crab directly from the kitchen rather than overcooked on steam tables.

Flack, 30, whose career arc stretches from McDonald’s and the Huddle House to culinary school and the Sea Island Cloister, has been a large part of the restaurant’s acceptance. He worked on all elements of Echo from its plates and silverware to its seasonal menu, staff training and presentation.

Considered “the face of Echo” by General Manager Michael Johnson

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Judy Wells For the Times-Union

Breakfast service at Echo in the King and Prince Beach & Golf Resort starts at 7 a.m. and offers such specialties as Shrimp and Grits and Eggs Benedict.

ECHO

King and Prince Beach & Golf Resort
201 Arnold Road
St. Simons Island, Ga.
Hours: 7 a.m.-10 p.m. daily
Cuisine: Classic coastal

ON THE MENU

Breakfast offerings: Malted Waffles (\$6); Peach French Toast (\$8); Eggs Benedict (\$10); Eggs Coastal with salmon, grit cake, crunchy egg and dill sauce (\$12).
Lunch/dinner offerings: Shrimp and Grits (\$23); Grouper (\$26); Fried

Green Tomato Melt Sandwich (\$8); Fried Quail and Waffles (\$15); Spicy Turkey Burger (\$10, or \$5); Pork Porterhouse (\$18); Beef Pot Roast (\$14); Echo Burger, with foie gras, tobacco onion, Boursin cheese and black truffle aioli (\$16, or \$8); Char Cedar Salmon (\$17).

Restaurant Review

Tapa That’s diverse menu a welcome addition to Five Points

Spanish-inspired dishes feature finger foods, spicy flavors, desserts

By **Jay Magee**
For the Times-Union

Along this eclectic procession of storefronts feeding Lomax Street into the spindle of Five Points, Tapa That blends well.

The small-plate-serving destination opened in April 2012 in a space formerly occupied by Heartworks Café, and more recently Five Points Coffee & Spice Co.

It’s a comfy, cool place for catching up over comfort food served in the Spanish tradition, or browsing its motley collection of wall art for sale by local artists. Choose from the traditional dining room up front, or the eight-seat bar and couch-dressed lounge separated by water wall at the back.

Along with a recently introduced “permanent” menu of meats, cheeses, spreads and finger foods such as quesadillas, the charm of the kitchen comes from its forever-changing, chalkboard-scrawled daily specials, with many vegan- and vegetarian-friendly options.

These fall into weekly themes — Taco Tuesday, Wine Down Wednesday, Fun Friday (with draft beer discounts) and Open Door

Sunday (with open mic and spoken-word recitals) — are just a few.

My review corps — we needed a table of four to tackle these tapas appropriately — went to work, starting with the Chef’s Choice Meat and Cheese Plate (\$15).

It would be easy to find a sampler plate of this caliber along Las Ramblas in Barcelona.

Our plank of prosciutto, whole-grain mustard, dates and honey, cornichon pickles, crostini bread, Stout Irish Porter and Port Wine Cheddar cheeses married sweet, salty, tangy, mild and creamy. It was a diverse-palate pleaser.

Did I mention we stumbled into Taco Tuesday? We wasted little time in calling up the Chorizo Tacos (Tuesday special: 3 for \$9), which also live on that permanent menu.

The chilled avocado calmed the lingering spicy bite from the pork sausage and created a pleasant contradiction, served open-face atop a corn tortilla.

Veg advocates should try the Tofu Tacos, a Taco Tuesday exclusive (2 for \$8) that’s altogether pleasant and mild.

Another menu mainstay, the BLT Quesadilla (\$8),

TAPA THAT

820 Lomax St.,
Five Points
(904) 376-9911
tapathat.com

Cuisine: Spanish tapas.
Hours: 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 5 p.m.-close Tuesday-Friday; 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 5 p.m.-close Saturday; 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 7-10 p.m. Sunday.
Credit cards: All major accepted.
Bar service: Beer and wine.
Children’s menu: No.
Catering: Yes.
Reservations: Accepted.
Price range: Tapas \$5-\$15.

nails the classic sandwich flavor with a spicy chipotle yogurt kicker.

Garlic lovers will have to seek out the Tostones with Black Beans (\$6), which made a brief chalkboard appearance during our stay. The lightly fried green plantains came topped with tomatoes and green onions and produced a satisfying crunch and a garlicky finish.

While none exist on the permanent menu, Tapa That highlighted on its blackboard two sweet treats to wrap up our visit.

The Banana Beignets (\$4) were light, bite-size,



Banana Beignets (\$4) are also available at Tapa That.

sugar-coated doughnut spheres with creamy insides that went down all too quickly. The Grilled Marinated Fruit with Coconut Cream (\$5) featured slices of orange, pineapple, kiwi and other

tropical selections, slightly caramelized and linearly arranged for dipping. For sweet-tooths seeking healthy options, it’s a great way to go.

Microbrew lovers who crave walls of taps or

bottles won’t find either here. You’re limited to five drafts, including local faves from Intuition, Bold City and Aardwolf, and a variety of wines by the glass.

Along with its daily menu themes, Tapa That offers Saturday and Sunday brunch with bottomless mimosas from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Weekday work warriors will find \$10 lunch specials, including salad and beverage.

From the warm, personal service to the cozy décor and well-crafted kitchen creations, Tapa That feels just like home in Five Points.

For more of Jay’s dining experiences, visit his blog at www.jaymagee.com.