



Jay Armstrong is the owner of Barbara Jean's, a Southern restaurant that specializes in homestyle cooking and seafood dishes.

photos by LEIGH CORT

**TABLE TALK**

with LEIGH CORT

# Barbara Jean's

## WHERE 'SHE CRAB' SOUP RUBS ELBOWS WITH CHICKEN FRIED CHICKEN!

There is an unrelenting passion and hunger for delicious food served in a memorable waterfront setting by professional caring staff! It sounds like a winning formula for restaurants; and somehow Barbara Jean's, which opened in 1997 on St. Simons Island, followed by Ponte Vedra in 1999 — has kept the traditions glowingly alive with Barbara Jean Barta's style and menu throughout the years.

By 2018, the Ponte Vedra location on Roscoe Boulevard finally became the dream of new owner Jay Armstrong, a seasoned restaurateur whose energy and passion for dining puts him in the upper tier of hands-on restaurant owners.

Barbara Jean's casual vibe feels like you're entering a lakeside cabin, where you can gaze across the water and imagine just about anything at all. The Intracoastal Waterway is as inconspicuous as a grizzly bear — a compelling view of this 3,000-mile inland waterway that draws landlocked guests to a moment of raw adventure even without pulling up in your yacht or speedboat!

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Today the outdoors is definitely "in!" Barbara Jean's at Old Ward's Landing captures the triple crown of good food, a spacious outdoor deck and an unobstructed water view. When it came upon the local scene 20-plus years ago, it was one of the first restaurants to open in this remarkable neighborhood — miles of rustic vintage waterfront cottages interspersed with gated mega-mansions. For two decades, its alluring open-air setting currently allows for appropriate table distancing, sprinkled with a healthy dose of sunshine and fresh air (AND shadowy romantic moonlight for dinner).

This dining legend continues to bring yachtsmen and landlubbers to their doorstep daily. Whether dining on property for lunch or dinner or calling ahead and having your meal delivered over the deck railing to boat captains for take-away dining only, the staff make it easy to enjoy one of the most unhurried relaxed feasts.



**STUNNING RESTAURANT VIEWS**

The Intracoastal Waterway at Old Ward's Landing



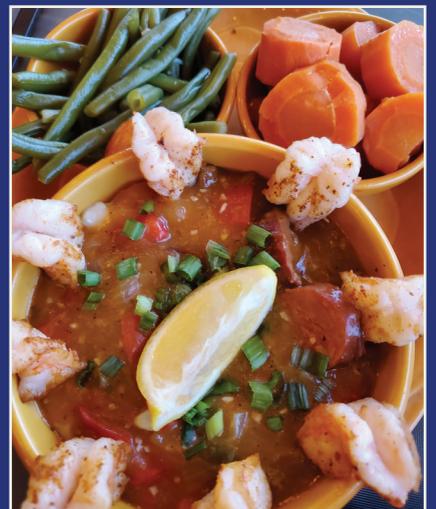
**FRESH-BAKED BREAD**

Trio of Pumpkin Bread, Sweet Jalapeno Cornbread and Warm Wheat Roll



**SEAFOOD SENSATION**

The famous Barbara Jean's Crabcakes



**A TASTE OF THE SOUTH**

Shrimp & Grits with Jumbo Sweet Carrots & Green Beans

Their cocktails stirred and shaken are recognizable relatives of classics. Celebrate the moment and location with a Palm Valley Bloody, ICW Mule or The Back Deck. Relax and escape with a chilled handcrafted cocktail that might be a Key Lime Tart Martini, Ponte Vedra Punch or a Cucumber Basil Cooler. The wine list is easy to navigate and only wine geeks will aspire to more.



Barbara Jean's breakout status began, and still continues, to introduce each meal with their homemade bread basket. Warm pumpkin bread, sweet jalapeno cornbread and a puffy wheat bun are truly irresistible. It's going to be difficult not to fill up before you've checked out the menu. Some patrons have even mentioned how they can't end their meal with a dessert because they felt as though they began with it as they finished every little crumb in the basket! Barbara Jean's celebrates its popular American culinary creativity with a few ground rules ... trying to define American comfort food is tough!

What they can promise you is that selecting a favorite menu item means overlooking some much-enjoyed signature specialties, so they hope you'll be back!

The menu cascades from one category to another; at the heart of their menu is great flavor and a bill of fare that ranges from the freshest seafood to the richest She Crab Soup and Shrimp & Grits. Crossover to Chicken Fried Chicken and Meat Loaf or Pork Chops. Select something "light" like BJ's Blue Salad with perfectly seared tender tuna! Plentiful portions and colorful presentations that lack any pretense — their mantra is consistency! Each dish somehow fosters a feeling of being at home in Barbara Jean's kitchen with friends and family paired with time-tested excellence always at the forefront of each dish.

Imagine the day when you're just in the mood for vegetables — "Glorious Vegetables" — and you can select five delectable options for your meal. There are never less than a dozen fresh choices — broccoli and rice casserole, sweet glazed carrots, stewed tomatoes, fresh cabbage, red beans and rice, giant baked potato and the inimitable squash casserole. Don't miss this one — it's worthy of a starring role any day! Each entrée gives you your choice so don't be shy. Try something deliciously new.

Since its opening day, Barbara Jean's has been lauded in practically every Southern publication — including Southern Living, Coastal Living and an excess of respected magazines and newspapers by highly respected food critics and fans. At the top of their "top picks." Crab Cakes take centerstage: Eastern Shore style with no fillings. What's their recipe secret? Crabmeat! I believe they're mandatory — they pull their own weight.



The food shows self-assurance with very little preening or brash culinary celebrity. I have my eye on page 2 of the menu with at least 50 more signature dishes to try this season. I'm already packing my appetite for Barbara Jean's. It's easy to find — and it's a great escape from the ordinary. Flip flops are just fine in this laid-back atmosphere, perfect for anytime casual dining.

Did someone mention cobbler?

For more information, go to [www.BarbaraJeans.com](http://www.BarbaraJeans.com)



## Coastal Casual AT ITS BEST



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