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## **SARASOTA AND HER ISLANDS ALL THE INGREDIENTS OF A GREAT VACATION**

SARASOTA, Fla. -- From casual crab shacks on the beach to European-style al fresco dining, Sarasota and Her Islands – located on southwest Florida’s Gulf coast – offers an award-winning restaurant scene that attracts travelers as much as the numerous art galleries, theaters and museums that abound in the destination. Boasting one of the highest concentrations of Zagat-rated restaurants in all of Florida, Sarasota restaurants are known for serving up creative menus that blend unique local ingredients with international flavor and taste bud altering talent.

“Sarasota’s mix of elevated culture and tropical environment draws a great number of chefs from major cities looking to live life on the beach while retaining the amenities of a cosmopolitan lifestyle,” states Michael Klauber, owner of Michael’s on East and president of the Sarasota-Manatee Originals – the first Florida Chapter of the Council of Independent Restaurants of America (CIRA), and the largest Originals chapter in the country.

As Sarasota has continued its evolution as a culinary destination, longtime favorites such as Bijou Café, Mediterraneo, Ophelia’s on the Bay and Café Baci have held their own despite competition from chains and big-box restaurants – which serves to add to the appeal and charm of Sarasota dining.

Downtown Sarasota has become a diner’s destination all its own with Selva Grill’s Peruvian flair and Derek’s Culinary Casual, offering daring menu of original flavors. On weekends, Rustic Grill serves up classics in the historic Rosemary District.

Those looking for a more casual approach to great food have many options in Sarasota as well. Patrick’s downtown offers an inviting place to mingle with the locals and bite into an all-American burger, or visitors can get their fill of fresh and affordable seafood at Café Brian’s or Barnacle Bills. Those looking for home-cooking and farm-fresh flavor should head to Sarasota’s Amish-Mennonite restaurants such as Yoder’s (especially for a sampling of their apple pie), and

for the best views in town, guests should visit the Crow's Nest Marina Restaurant in Venice, Old Salty Dog on City Island and Marina Jack's downtown.

From the jumbo stone crab claws at Crab & Fin on St. Armand's Circle, to the U-Peel-U-Eat Shrimp at the Casey Key Fish House and flounder stuffed with brie, spinach and crab at Mattison's City Grill, to fresh, organic and locally grown cuisine offered at Vernona at the Sarasota Ritz-Carlton, travelers are greeted by an imaginative array of choices sure to please even the most discriminating of palates.

Adding to Sarasota's appeal as a culinary destination are two annual culinary events which both help to draw visitors looking for a great meal. This June 1<sup>st</sup> – 14th, Sarasota hosts its fourth annual Restaurant Week, "Savor Sarasota." The event is a weeklong celebration of Sarasota's renowned cuisine. Restaurant chefs design special multi-course menus priced at \$15 for lunch and \$25 for dinner, making even Sarasota's most expensive restaurants affordable to patrons. Savor Sarasota 2009's participating restaurants include 5 One 6 Burns, Café Venice, Cork, Crow's Nest, Currents Restaurants at The Hyatt Regency, Derek's Culinary Casual, Drydock Waterfront Grill, Euphemia Haye, Harry's Continental Kitchen, Hyde Park Prime Steakhouse, Lido Beach Grille, MacAllisters Grill & Tavern, Marina Jack's, Michaels on East, Pattiegeorge's, Pino's 100 Central, Polo Grill & Bar, Roessler's Restaurant, Siesta Key Oyster Bar, The Colony, and Vernona. To find out what's cooking and other information, visit [www.savorsarasota.com](http://www.savorsarasota.com).

Additionally, the annual "Stone Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival" at The Colony Beach and Tennis Resort on Longboat Key kicks off the stone crab season every year in October. The year 2009 will mark the 19<sup>th</sup> year of the event, which features fine dining, live music and dancing on the beach, as well as culinary demonstrations, wine seminars and the opportunity to mingle with some of the country's top chefs.

For a taste of Sarasota and Her Islands, contact the **Sarasota Convention and Visitors Bureau** at **(800) 552-9799** or visit **[www.savorsarasota.com](http://www.savorsarasota.com)**.

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