

THE ORCHID ISLAND GOLF & BEACH CLUB CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY

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The rich, diamond-patterned wood floor is just one of the features adding to the ambiance of the club.

A WISH LIST WITH AN “UPSCALE CASUAL” THEME COMES TRUE

THE ORCHID ISLAND GOLF & BEACH CLUB CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY
WITH A RENOVATION OF THE GOLF CLUBHOUSE.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRIDLEY + GRAVES

The Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club hits a quarter century milestone this year. In the run-up to the 25th anniversary, the club completed the latest in its ongoing efforts to upgrade, improve and enhance its facilities – the renovation of the golf clubhouse.

The dedicated committee in charge of the project realized that they had more than achieved their objectives when they heard the “Wows” and similar exclamations uttered at the club’s grand opening last November. And it’s easy to see why.

From the textured bluestone walkway leading to the arched mahogany and glass front entrance – through the lobby with its rich, diamond-patterned wood floor and the hint of vibrant colors that begin to set the rhythm for the revamped dining space – into the dining area that is both open yet compartmentalized and intimate in design – and finally through to the expanded veranda overlooking the sparkling lake that is home to migrating birds by day and lit by the moon by night, the clubhouse reached all the desired benchmarks for style, functionality, flexibility and comfort.

It took over two years to plan and the summer of 2014 to execute. At every step in the refurbishing process, the committee provided the Orchid membership with regular updates. “It was extremely important that our members knew what we were doing and why,” Committee Chairman John Crosby says. “We wanted complete transparency and

constantly sought feedback. We provided renderings prior to construction, and every three to four weeks during the summer we sent out photos of the progress.” He quips, “We said if a member comes back and is surprised, then we’ve failed.” Obviously they did not.

The committee members who pulled the project together under Crosby’s leadership included Orchid members Stephanie Hahn, Marilyn Palmer, Jim Herbison and Donna Thrailkill; General Manager Rob Tench and Food and Beverage Manager Pam Sanchez along with members of the design and construction teams.

The project had its roots in the club’s long-range plan. The maxim of the board of governors and management is to maintain the finest, most up-to-date facilities for the benefit of current and future members, Crosby says. With this in mind, the committee looked both inward and outward to determine member preferences and current and trending themes among clubs throughout the nation.

Early in 2013, the board of governors hired The McMahon Group of St. Louis. “In working with this group, who are well-known club planners and consultants, we asked what is contemporary and what are other clubs doing?” Crosby says. “Then with their help, we conducted focus groups to determine what our members wanted. Over 100 people participated in these groups and others completed written surveys. From this we were able to come up with a ‘wish list.’”



Both dining areas offer tables, booths and banquettes.



The outdoor area with two fire pits are extremely popular among members.

The research established a theme, “upscale casual.” It also showed that members wanted additional venues for casual dining – including outdoor dining, seating options from the traditional tables and chairs to booths and banquettes, and a bar that would accommodate dining – all in an acoustically pleasant environment.

Susan Smith, an interior designer and focus group member, proposed a solution to the noise problem: adding raffia fabric inside the ceiling coffers. This addition, along with a ceiling’s wood slatted acoustical system, provides superior sound absorption. The texture of the raffia and the rich mahogany, along with crown molding trim, offers further aesthetic details to the space. The acoustical ceiling design is also used in the entry lobby.

In the design of the dining area, Crosby says, the committee wanted a feeling of openness. “And we achieved this because when you enter the space, the ceiling is visible throughout, and you can see through to the lake. Yet the space is sectioned into two distinct dining areas. One is the more intimate fireplace room, with tables, booths and banquettes. In the evening we add tablecloths to give it a slightly less casual feel.”

“The other area has similar seating options, along with the bar. The bar is longer and deeper to make it comfortable and inviting for those who want to have lunch or dinner there. Then we added a four-foot divider to separate the bar from the dining area. And we updated and soundproofed the kitchen located behind the bar,” he notes.

Outside on the two-tiered veranda, the club accommodates 65 to 70 guests. Both covered and open-air seating are on the first level. Below are tables and chairs for dining and lounge chairs that surround two fire pits. Outside lighting around the trees, along the border of the lake and the flagpole enhance the view. The culinary team designed a casual pre-dinner and snack menu for members gravitating to the outdoor area and the fire pits.

Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club’s British West Indies architectural and interior design style was one of the elements that attracted the members to the community in the first place. So when it came to selecting colors, accessories and other details, the committee retained the essence of the style but refreshed and updated it. They replaced the sage green with vibrant green, geranium and brown shades.

Green fabric covers the booths. The wide brown and white stripes on the banquettes give a smart new look, as do the brown geometric designs in the accent pillows. The brown and green palette extends to the veranda’s rattan dining and lounge chairs. White grass cloth covers the walls throughout the dining and lobby areas. This not only offers texture but also adds another acoustical buffer, as does the fabric covering much of the seating in the dining area.

“Varying the colors, textures and fabrics in the seating and accessories as well as lighting the dining areas with a number of different fixtures gives a further sense of intimacy to the space,” Smith adds about the decor.

The art in the dining area is unique to the Orchid community and is the work of noted bird and wildlife photographer Wink Gaines. Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club is a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary and home to some 60 species of birds – including white pelicans, herons, egrets and spoonbills – and myriad species of plants found in and around the Indian River. Gaines spent considerable time photographing the wildlife of Orchid. The images, printed in various shapes and sizes onto coated aluminum

sheets to allow maximum definition, impact a visitor’s eye as no ordinary artwork can.

As Smith put it, “We wanted art that spoke to the heart of the community.”

To further understand the heart of the community, one has to go back to the origins of Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club with its enduring spirit of neighborliness and friendship that is deepened by a sense of responsibility to preserve the natural beauty that surrounds it.



The updated bar is longer and deeper than the previous one to accommodate diners.



The art in the dining area is unique to Orchid and the work of noted wildlife photographer Wink Gaines.

In the late 1880s, members of the Michaels family from West Virginia settled the 600 acres that now encompass Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club. They were the first to grow and export the famed Indian River grapefruit. By 1965 the handful of people who lived on the strip of fertile land bordered by the ocean and State Road 510 incorporated the Town of Orchid.

In 1986, the residents sold the town to the Deerfield Groves Corporation, which in turn sold the entire property to Robert Haines III, a developer from Avon, Connecticut. He transformed the Town of Orchid into an ocean-to-river residential community called Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club, built the Arnold Palmer Golf Course, the three-story West Indies-style Beach Club and four tennis courts. By 1990 he sold 10 home sites.

When the recession hit the nation and Florida's real estate market plummeted, construction at Orchid and the rest of Indian River County stopped. But in 1994, Galen Weston of Canada, who developed Windsor just north of Orchid, bought the property. Immediately Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club began a climb that has yet to end.

In 2007, Torwest, Inc. turned control of the property owners association to the equity members of the Orchid

Island Golf & Beach Club. The Town of Orchid is the only municipality in Florida that is also a property owners association and a private equity club.

Today the close-knit community with 376 West Indies style homes also includes 66 low-rise oceanfront condominiums; the Arnold Palmer Championship Golf Course; an elegant Beach Club; 11,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art fitness center; eight impeccably maintained Har-Tru clay courts; and, of course, the newly renovated golf clubhouse.

The Club will celebrate its 25th anniversary the week of March 9 starting with a reception in the Orchid Lobby of Riverside Theatre, so named because of the generosity of the residents who contributed \$1 million to the theatre's capital campaign fund.

Other events will include golf and tennis tournaments, a formal dinner dance and a casual Beatles-themed party, which will take place under a tent on the golf course.

So what's on the horizon for the next five or 10 or maybe even 25 years? Well actually, plenty!

Ted Hutton, immediate past president of the club, puts it this way, "Show me a club that is not improving its facilities and its amenities every year, and I'll show you a club that is in decline." He continues, "It is critical that a club constantly upgrades, improves, refurbishes and assesses



An extended, covered patio allows for al fresco dining.

what it offers its current and future members. We have a master facilities plan where we look out over a period of at least five to 10 years and determine the priorities – all with input from the members.”

This summer the golf course fairways are scheduled to be re-grassed and the bunkers refurbished. “We will seed the fairways with a new variety of Bermuda grass called ‘Celebration’ that many of the top clubs on the Treasure Coast use,” Hutton says. The drought-resistant Celebration requires less water and fertilizer to produce superior golf course turf. This is just one of the steps the club will be taking to host the U.S. Senior Women’s Amateur Championship September 29 to October 4 of 2018.

However, the planned renovation of the Beach Club is the most significant upgrade that the members can expect next. Proposals include adding a multi-purpose room, expanding the seaside lounge and adding a pool bar. Meetings with members to review plans are occurring now, Hutton says. “And next fall we will be able to lay out the costs and explain how we will finance the project. Work will be done in the summer of 2016 and 2017.”

Crosby explains why the club has near-universal acceptance of its improvements. “We pride ourselves on being a member-driven community with a high degree of intimacy. There has been very little dissent or dissatisfaction with any of our projects because we share the attitude that we want to be first class. We want to be ahead of the curve. The combination of the leadership’s willingness to follow this mantra and the members’ support of it is the essence of our club.” ❁

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 Mike Sturgis, Project Manager
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A NEW CHEF BRINGS A NEW APPROACH TO
DINING AT ORCHID ISLAND GOLF & BEACH CLUB.

BUY FRESH, BUY LOCAL, SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

The terms "hand-crafted," "freshly-harvested," "farm to table," "grass-fed" and "artisanal" are all buzz words rapidly becoming an ever-louder drum beat over the last few years. So it's no surprise that many chefs have turned their focus to searching for fresh, local foods to serve in their restaurants. Chris Sozio, the newly hired executive chef at Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club is no different. He and his team wholly subscribe to the philosophy: Buy fresh, buy local and support sustainability.

Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club – a private, gated community offering luxury properties, breathtaking vistas and an Arnold Palmer Championship golf course – is nestled between the Indian River Lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean in the town of Orchid, located just eight miles north of Vero Beach.

Ranking in the top 20 in the Nation by Prevo Health Solutions for being one of America's healthiest clubs for employees and members alike, the club is dedicated to continually upgrading its facilities and amenities to give members a private-island lifestyle that encourages both health and wellness.

Never more so than in the restaurants over which Chef Sozio presides. Whether dining at the elegant Beach Club, enjoying more casual fare at the Pool Grille or relaxing after a game of golf in the newly-renovated Golf Club overlooking the fairways, all the restaurants are dedicated to serving dishes prepared from the healthiest ingredients, sourced and freshly harvested from local farms.

Newly appointed Executive Chef Chris Sozio leads a team dedicated to bringing farm-fresh, locally harvested produce to the dining rooms at Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club.



"We're constantly reinvesting both in the club and the staff to bring it to new levels," explains Robert Tench, the Club's general manager. "We're really excited to have Chef Sozio on board. He brings a lot to the table with his history and experience."

Sozio hails from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. One of four boys, his father owned a deli and restaurant in Andalusia where it was all hands on deck growing up. "We did everything from washing pots to stocking shelves and making hoagies," he says. In his



Packed with protein, vitamins and minerals, this hearty soup is a satisfying way to serve nutritious kale.

senior year of high school, he started thinking about a career in cooking and was accepted into the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park.

On graduating, one of his first jobs was at Caneel Bay Resort in St. John, a Caribbean haven founded by Laurance Rockefeller. It was there Sozio met Executive Chef John Farnsworth. Regaled by *Food & Wine Magazine* as being “one of the greatest chefs of his generation,” Farnsworth became Sozio’s long-time mentor. “He taught me everything,” says Sozio, “from

cooking from scratch to buying the best ingredients in season and showing me how to tap into the local farms for the freshest produce.”

Two years into his stint in the Caribbean, the Dole Corporation hired a culinary crew from Caneel Bay to set up two similar resorts in Hawaii and Sozio became part of Farnsworth’s team. “In Hawaii, we had a co-op farm where the locals grew fruits, herbs and vegetables for the hotels and kept some for their families so it was a win-win for everybody,” he says.

Sausage, Cannellini Bean and Kale Soup

Serves 6



- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup carrots, finely diced
- ¾ cup white onions, finely diced
- ½ cup celery, finely diced, reserving inner leaves
- ½ tablespoon minced garlic
- 12 ounces Italian sausage, casing removed
- ¾ cup tomatoes, finely diced
- 3 cups cannellini beans, pre-soaked overnight
- 6 cups chicken stock
- ½ tablespoon fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- salt & black pepper to taste
- 2 bunches kale, washed, blanched and roughly chopped
- 1 bunch Italian parsley, washed and roughly chopped

Heat the oil in a large pot and sweat the carrots, onions, celery and garlic over low heat until translucent and tender. Add the sausage and cook, breaking the meat up with a wooden spoon while stirring. Add the tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes. Add the beans, chicken stock, thyme and bay leaf and bring to a simmer until beans are tender, occasionally skimming the fat off the top. Remove the bay leaf and season with salt and pepper. Place one third of the soup into a blender and purée. (Only fill the blender up halfway, pulsing until smooth). Add puréed soup to the remaining soup in the pot. Put the kale and parsley into soup bowls, ladle in soup and garnish with torn celery leaves.



Honey, mascarpone and fresh berries make for an irresistible combination of flavors. Paired with the crunch of almond biscotti, you have a dinner party winner.

After three and one-half years, he joined Farnsworth at the Mayflower Inn in Connecticut, an upscale boutique hotel. And just three years later, he followed Farnsworth yet again, this time to John's Island in Vero Beach. On learning of the job, Sozio, an avid boater and fisherman, looked at a map and says he really didn't have to think twice before moving here. "Both the environment and working for Chef Farnsworth again felt right," he notes.

When describing his culinary journey to date, he says, "In my opinion, chefs sometimes advance too quickly and don't get the experience they need. I took my time before I got my first management position as a sous chef and I also spent many years as an executive sous chef. I think it's essential to build a foundation where you learn different food styles and techniques. I also think it's important for chefs to travel to learn about different cultures."

Honey Mascarpone with Winter Berries and Almond Biscotti

Serves 6



- 1 pint strawberries
- 1 pint blueberries
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 24 ounces mascarpone
(4 ounces per person)
- 6 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch cinnamon
- 1 pint raspberries
- 2 tablespoons fresh mint, cut into fine julienne
- 6 almond biscotti

Rinse strawberries, remove stems and quarter. Place in a mixing bowl. Wash blueberries and add to bowl with the sugar. Mix in a folding motion and allow to sit for 30 minutes.

Put mascarpone into separate mixing bowl and mix the honey, vanilla and cinnamon in by hand. Do not over mix. To serve, put mascarpone into 6 rocks glasses. Fold the raspberries and mint into the rest of the berries and spoon on top of mascarpone along with the natural juices from the berries. Top with almond biscotti and serve.



The newly renovated Golf Club restaurant offers al fresco dining, fire pits and scenic views of the lake and fairways.

Feeling ready for a new challenge after 18 years at John's Island, Sozio joined Orchid Island Club on October 1, 2014 as executive chef. He is privileged to oversee a team of seasoned professionals: newly hired Chef Michael Van Buskirk, previously from Cobalt, and 14-year veteran Wayan Sutriasa who Sozio says has invaluable knowledge of the club members and banqueting. Both embrace Chef Sozio's passion for serving the freshest and most nutritious food. "All the staff are excited about the style of the new food program," says Sozio.

And it would seem members and employees are taking note. Member Jeanne-Marie Vargo praised the recent changes. "Executive Chef Chris Sozio's leadership skills were apparent immediately upon arrival at Orchid this past fall," she says. "The newly formed team deserves every ounce of recognition for their incredible culinary skills." She says they now see dishes inspired by the freshest of Florida fish, prime cuts of meat and locally grown produce.

Vardo continues, "This team has created an enhanced and winning

dining experience at Orchid. I think I can easily speak for all the club's members when I say, 'Thank you so much' for all the hard work they perform. It really shows!" Vargo continues. Director of Tennis Jim Buck concurs, saying that employees are benefiting from the fresh selections offered too.

"The meals are healthy, nutritious and really good," he says. As the club prepares to celebrate its 25th anniversary this month, promoting optimum health and wellness would seem to be a winning formula all the way round.

A perfect marriage of flavors and a healthy, low-fat entrée. The celeriac lends a superb creaminess to this puree while the mild anise flavor of the fennel provides the perfect foil to the acidity in the salsa and the sweetness of the scallops.



Pan Roasted Sea Scallops with Green Olive Salsa, Brussels Sprout Leaves, Fennel and Celeriac Purée

Serves 6

Green Olive Salsa

- 2 cups pitted Italian green olives
- 6 ounces fine quality olive oil
- ½ bunch Italian parsley, washed and roughly chopped
- 2 anchovies, finely minced
- 2 strips lemon zest, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- Salt and cracked black pepper to taste

Chop olives to a medium coarseness, put in a mixing bowl and fold in rest of ingredients. Hold at room temperature.

Fennel and Celeriac Purée

- 2 fennel bulbs
- 8 cups chicken stock
- 2 celeriac, peeled and cut into quarters
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and white pepper to taste

Pull fronds from tops of fennel, chop finely and reserve for garnish.

Wash fennel and remove stalks, cut in quarters and remove core. Place in a pot with chicken stock and pinch of salt. When fennel is ¾ cooked – about 20 minutes – add the celeriac and cook until both are very tender. Drain and reserve stock. Place fennel and celeriac in a blender, add the olive oil and puree. Use the reserved chicken stock to adjust consistency. Season with salt and white pepper. Hold in a covered pot over low heat until ready to plate.

Brussels Sprouts

- 6 sprouts per person
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and white pepper to taste

Wash sprouts. Trim off stem and peel away leaves from the stem end.

Continue until all leaves have come off. Sauté the leaves in olive oil on medium high heat until tender. Season with salt and white pepper.

Scallops

- 4 large scallops per person
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Remove side muscle from scallops and place on a paper towel to absorb any moisture.

Once the salsa, sprouts and purée are ready, season the scallops and pan roast them in olive oil until golden brown on both sides. To plate, fold chopped fennel fronds into the purée and place in center of plate. Spread out puree in a circular motion to 1 inch from the rim of plate. Place Brussels sprouts in center of plate, put scallops on top, then top each scallop with olive salsa and serve. ☘