

Fishy

BONEFISH IN HOOVER OPERATES FROM A SIMPLE PREMISE: "WE GET FISH."

BY LOYD MCINTOSH



Mussels Josephine

A restaurant concept developed by the Outback Corporation (Outback Steakhouse, Carraba's, Fleming's Prime Steakhouse), Bonefish was launched in 2000 from the company's hometown of St. Petersburg, Florida, with a simple idea that has evolved into the company's motto: We get fish. Everyday.

Since the restaurant's beginnings

almost four years ago, Bonefish has established locations in 10 states, mostly in the eastern United States (North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, Kentucky, Ohio, Virginia and Indiana) as well as one location in Seattle, Washington. Birmingham's Bonefish location opened in mid-summer 2003 with a Montgomery location opening soon

after.

Bonefish is located at the Galleria in what was formerly Tia's Southwest Grill. Feeling sure that Birmingham would embrace the concept of a casual-elegant restaurant specializing in fresh fish, Bonefish has been luring back customers to the Riverchase area. Gone is the Southwestern-themed gaudiness of Tia's and, in its

place, is a restaurant with a more classic, reserved style. Complete with dark woods, soft lighting and jazz playing at a reasonable volume, Bonefish displays a more relaxed atmosphere than many other chain establishments that tend to punch you in the face with their Vegas-tinged silliness. In fact, Bonefish is somewhat comparable to the trend in modern steakhouses, with the rich woods and elegant textures creating a graciousness that is sadly lacking in many corporate-owned chain restaurants.

However, this doesn't necessarily mean that Bonefish is stuffy and aristocratic. It's still a casual dining restaurant that does its best to offer fresh fish prepared in a variety of ways in a comfortable and comparatively inexpensive environment, says Bonefish Birmingham Managing Partner Dusty Leeming.

"I would say we're basically a polished casual restaurant in a great, comfortable environment," Leeming says. "(The restaurant) has a very open and inviting atmosphere.

"We wanted it to have a certain buzz to it," Leeming adds. "When we're full and the jazz is playing and everyone is having a good conversation, then there is just a great buzz and energy to the restaurant."

As for the food, Bonefish holds its own with any of the great seafood restaurants throughout Birmingham. The folks behind Bonefish have been at this for a while and know how to prepare good food on a large scale and keep it consistent from location to location.

Fresh fish is delivered to Bonefish's kitchen six days a week where it is hand cut, filleted and prepared for dinner seven days a week. The process is lengthy and somewhat time consuming and is one of the primary reasons Bonefish is open only for dinner. Every type of fish, from Ahi tuna and Chilean Sea Bass to Atlantic salmon and shrimp from the



Sea Bass Oscar

Gulf of Mexico, is prepared on a specially designed oak-fired grill that adds a subtle but hearty flavor to any cut of fish, according to kitchen manager Bryan Brown.

"We use a white oak but we don't use too much," Brown says. "It's not overpowering at all, it's just enough to give it that flavor.

"We don't cook with the wood so it's not like you get smoked fish here like you would get smoked ribs at a barbecue place," he adds. "It's just enough to add a nice, light flavor that enhances the fish."

The regular menu allows diners a chance to create their own flavor combinations with multiple choices of different sauces and toppings that can be added to any piece of fish. Leeming says this range of flavors

and styles is a key attraction for Bonefish's frequent diners.

"What our regular customer loves about us is the variety of toppings that we offer," Leeming says. "From a classic thermidor cream sauce with chunks of Maine lobster claws to our classic Oscar topping."

For example, visitors can try a grilled Mahi Mahi filet in a lemon butter sauce, a lime tomato garlic sauce, a mango salsa or even "Pan Asian style." Some of Bonefish's specialty toppings include a bacon gorgonzola topping—sautéed spinach, bacon and gorgonzola cheese—and a Bellaire topping which includes artichoke hearts, sun-dried tomatoes and goat cheese combined with a lemon basil sauce.

Other toppings and sauces appear

THE DETAILS: *Bonefish Grill*

Address: 3430 Galleria Circle
Phone: 985-9545

Hours: Mon.-Thurs.
4-10:30, Fri. & Sat.
4-11:30, Sun. 11-9.

www.bonefishgrill.com

Reservations taken
Full bar



on Bonefish's nightly specials menu, such as a Walkerswood salmon. For this dish a grilled filet of Atlantic salmon is topped with sautéed mushrooms and sun dried tomatoes and a Walkerswood sauce—a Jamaican-style sauce similar to jerk sauces in many Caribbean-influenced dishes.

However, Leeming says, diners are free to substitute any cut of fish or sauce they wish, adding a sense of fun and culinary experimentation as visitors decide what to try next. Or you can you experience a bit of Maryland and the Eastern Seaboard with a crab cake appetizer.

This type of variety and diversity among culinary styles gives Bonefish the opportunity to explore regional flavors from all over the world. The restaurant doesn't specialize in the cuisine of one geographic area, but, instead, chooses to explore the culinary landscape.

For instance, one of Bonefish's most popular appetizers is the Bang Bang Shrimp. In this dish, shrimp from the Gulf region is fried and


tossed in a spicy sauce with a significant Asian flair and served on a bed of fresh, green lettuce. In fact, the Asian influence is so prominent that the shrimp is served with chopsticks fully embracing the dish's geographic origins.

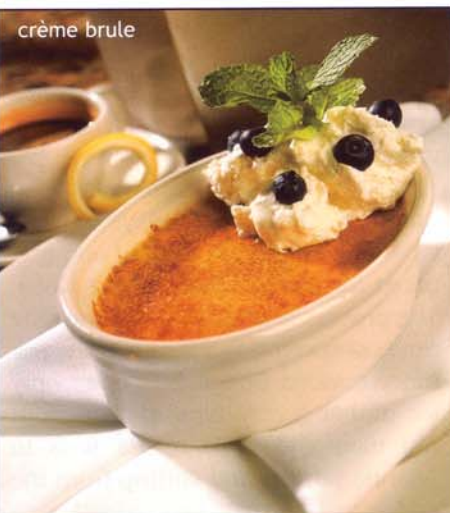
Leeming says the goal of Bonefish is not to specialize in a specific culinary style or ethnicity, but to simply prepare fresh fish in a variety of ways while creating an invigorating and brisk setting.

Even though it may be strange to go to a seafood restaurant if you don't like fish, Bonefish has a selection of entrees for those of you who would rather stay on dry land. For instance, Bonefish offers a chicken marsala with prosciutto, mushrooms and marsala wine, a nine ounce filet mignon or a pork tenderloin piccata which is dusted in garlic crumb, grilled and topped with a portabella piccata sauce.

All of Bonefish's desserts are prepared daily from scratch. Either a sample of Bonefish's crème brule or

a slice of Key lime pie is a great way to end your meal if you have room left to indulge your sweet tooth.

A full compliment of wines and liquors are also available behind the marble-topped bar. The bar area also has plenty of booths and communal tables for gathering with friends or family after work or at the end of a long day of shopping at the Galleria. Reservations are never needed at this interesting fresh fish restaurant. 



Photos: B. Gustafson