

The Rockfish Goes Green

By Danielle M. Angeline



Steve Buchanan Photography

A famous frog once sang, “It isn’t easy being green,” but that isn’t stopping The Rockfish from making every effort to go green and become a model of eco-friendliness in the business world. The “casually elegant” seafood and American classics restaurant located in the Eastport Maritime district is not only undergoing various physical improvements but is also improving its relationship to the environment.

Patrons will notice plenty of enhancements when they visit the restaurant: a column missing from the bar area, giving it a more spacious feel; booths moved from the designated

smoking area to the dining room, providing more private and intimate seating; and plush leather upholstered sofas with two big-screen televisions added to the bar area, creating a sports-bar atmosphere. Yet General Manager Matt McLaughlin really gets excited when he discusses the “other” changes taking place at The Rockfish—or “The Rock,” as it is fondly referred to by many local patrons.

Last March, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) presented The Rockfish with a Certificate of Environmental Stewardship officially certifying it as a “green” business, “The certificate is for operating our business with 100% wind power,” said McLaughlin. “We are committed to becoming a leader and supporting neighborhood businesses and residences in going green.” The measure means an annual avoidance of emitting over a million pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually, the equivalent of removing 156 passenger vehicles from the road for each year.

Patrons have the option of choosing environmentally-friendly dishes from The Rockfish’s menu, which states, “We at The Rockfish care deeply about the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay region. In order to reflect this attitude we choose to use sustainable seafood products whenever possible.” Entrée items of this nature are marked on the chef’s recommendations menu, which



include fresh rockfish filet topped with jumbo lump crabmeat and sherry Dijon cream; grilled swordfish marinated in lemon, parsley and olive oil; and seared Atlantic scallops tossed with pancetta in a sweet and spicy plum glaze.

Drawing inspiration from the “passion for environmental leadership” of Chef and Partner Charlie Bauer, Executive Sous Chef and Kitchen Manager Greg Dowling has recently also implemented summer menu changes that are also eco-friendly.

For customers on the go, The Rockfish will package a “green” picnic basket for your next nautical adventure or romantic evening. The Eastportian package includes crisp salads, sandwich entrees, and light-fair dessert, while the

Annapolitan and the Chesapeake offer sashimi appetizers, sandwich, salad, or wrap entrees plus dessert. A bottle of red or white wine is included, and prices range from \$80.00 to \$100.00 plus a deposit for the basket, silverware, glasses, wine opener, and cool packs, which must be returned within 48 hours. Helping fight the rising cost of gas and electricity, The Rockfish has implemented a “First Catch” three-course



One of the environmentally-friendly dishes The Rockfish offers: fresh rockfish filet topped with jumbo lump crabmeat and sherry Dijon cream.

prix fixe summer wine feast, available Sunday through Thursday from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. For around \$60.00, couples can dine on their choice of several tasty appetizers, sumptuous seafood entrees, and decadent desserts, while enjoying a bottle of red or white wine.

For summer of 2008, The Rockfish will have completed their rooftop dining, adding 145 seats. Neighborhood friendly (meaning no bar or music), patrons will be able to dine amid a soft summer breeze and beautiful view of City Dock and the Chesapeake Bay. McLaughlin, who has been experimenting on his own property, hopes to add a rooftop garden—which would require only 10% of the water required to maintain traditional gardens—as well. Instead of bouncing off the blacktop, UV rays from the sun will be absorbed by the greenery, reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

“Also, rain will be captured in the garden beds instead of the harmful scenario of running off the roof, down the gut-

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ters and into the street, carrying with it minerals and bits of asphalt that run into the Bay," McLaughlin said.

Currently, McLaughlin is looking into having local farms utilize the restaurant's food waste to produce organic compost, which he would use to grow vegetables and herbs for incorporation into the chef's dishes. "It's a complicated thing," he said, referring to the different types of nutrients. As this article is being written, McLaughlin will be headed to the Home Depot to purchase energy-efficient bulbs to replace the 311 bulbs at the restaurant. Some number-crunching—which he checked several times—indicates there will be a savings of \$97 per bulb or \$24,000 in electricity costs, plus untold savings on air conditioning (the bulbs also create less heat). The environmental impact, which promises to be extraordinary, he's still figuring out.

Ultimately, The Rockfish hopes to honor its commitment to the environment by making every aspect of its business eco-friendly. "By doing so, we support the Bay and the livelihood of those around it," says McLaughlin with a smile. "Plus, it's an exciting adventure."