

DINING OUT

Great views and food at My Place by the Sea in Rockport



PHOTOS BY MARK LORENZ FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The uncovered outside deck at Rockport's My Place by the Sea offers terrific ocean views.

By Kathy Shiels Tully | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 03, 2014

If the Pilgrims were to rediscover the New World today, I'd suggest they skip landing at Plymouth Rock and instead sail up to the rugged shoreline of Rockport. There, they'd discover My Place by the Sea, one of the most romantic settings for a restaurant

on the North Shore, a hideaway perched near the very end of scenic Bearskin Neck.

At least that's how my husband and I felt on a recent day-trip adventure, without the kids, to explore this popular coastal town, which attracts busloads of tourists from all over.

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Strolling down Bearskin Neck, it's easy to get distracted by the crowds of people and tight weave of shops — silver jewelry, beach clothes, an old-time country store, antiques — blended with a mix of takeout food joints serving everything from hot dogs to strudel.

But don't. A jewel of a restaurant awaits you at the end.

Owners Barbara Stavropoulos and Kathy Milbury have been working their magic with the restaurant's homey ambience, new American cuisine, and beachy decor since 2000. To boot, Mother Nature kicks in stunning sunsets that will render you silent with awe.

My Place by the Sea



68 Bearskin Neck, Rockport 978-546-9667.

<http://myplacebythesea.com/>

Hours: Open April through November, 11:30 a.m.

to 3 p.m. for lunch, reservations taken from 5:30 to 9 p.m. for dinner; upstairs bar open 3 to 9 p.m., weather permitting.

Credit cards: Major credit cards accepted

Handicap accessibility: Handicapped accessible

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Photos: My Place by the Sea

My Place by the Sea is the ultimate in al fresco dining.

Windows all around afford spectacular ocean views, no matter where you dine: inside the main dining room; outside on the covered deck with roof and plastic roll-down covering, good for windy or rainy days; outside on the uncovered deck (tables have umbrellas); and at the bar upstairs.

Though it appears small from the outside, the three-tiered restaurant, painted a sea-foam green with French vanilla white trim, seats 120.

While Mother Nature assaults your visual senses, Stavropoulos and Milbury do their best to take care of the rest, cooking with fresh ingredients and seafood, including lobster from Gloucester and shellfish from Ipswich Shellfish.

While Kathy dazzles from behind the stove, Barbara (they go by their first names) oversees the front of the restaurant and the gardens, setting the mood with a warm, welcoming vibe. Stepping inside the front door, the dynamic team makes you feel that My Place is *your* place by the sea.

We toasted our lunchtime adventure with a My Place Blue Sky Martini (\$14), a perfect choice to “drink in” our ocean blue surroundings. The sweet concoction blended Stoli Raspberry, triple sec, blue Curaçao, and a splash of fresh citrus, finished with a sugared rim.

For appetizer, we shared the special chef tasting of three crostini (\$19.50): a lobster salad, big chunks of lobster with the slightest touch of mayo; a crispy coated petite Maine crabcake; and tuna Niçoise, tuna salad filled with bits of black olives and scallions, served on a bed of mesclun greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, and onions, then drizzled with a red wine vinaigrette.

Each bite, better than the next, confirmed we had made the right decision coming here. Our only misgiving? Next time, we'll each get our own.

The clam chowder (\$10), Kathy says, is one of the first dishes she learned to make when she started at Nantucket's Boarding House restaurant. Made with a blend of milk and half-and-half, it's a satisfying bowl that's not too heavy, not too thin, filled with clams, bits (not chunks) of potatoes, and applewood-smoked bacon.

For an entrée, the baked scallop and artichoke with mustard crumbs (\$20), a signature dish, alternates generous-sized scallops and artichokes, brushed with Dijon mustard and rolled in panko breadcrumbs, then baked to a crispy finish, providing a delightful crunchy exterior to the soft interiors. Kathy says Ipswich Shellfish hand-picks the scallops for her. The dish was served with a green bean and carrot mix, lightly steamed to preserve the freshness, and potatoes.

Grilled mini gourmet pizza (\$17.50) changes daily. "Mini" is a deceiving description. The dough is made fresh in-house, and this day, it was loaded with chunks of sweet Italian sausage and thin slices of Vidalia onion, all on a plain red sauce topped with fresh mozzarella.



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Clam chowder at My Place by the Sea in Rockport.

Coco Daniel (\$10.75) proved a dessert too tempting to resist (and another dish you won't want to share). The light coconut cake, served on a pool of crème Anglaise (a custard sauce), is topped with caramel sauce and sprinkled with chunks of homemade peanut brittle that's good enough to be its own dessert.

The menu is more formal for dinner, with entrées in the \$30 to \$50 range. But you can enjoy My Place in the evenings without breaking the bank.

The upstairs bar is open from 3 to 9 p.m., so you can take in the sunset while enjoying light fare — a fruit and cheese plate, a sandwich, assorted crostini, or a plate of oysters along with glass of wine or a cold beer. (Kathy and Barbara were instrumental in persuading Rockport, a dry town holdout, to change its liquor laws in 2005.)

A few notes for smooth sailing on your adventure: Reservations are highly recommended. Eight metered spots are located outside, but we found the better bet is the metered and street parking in town.

Once you discover My Place by the Sea, you won't want to tell anybody. You'll want to claim it as your own.



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A signature drink, a Blue Martini, at My Place by the Sea in Rockport.

Visit www.bostonglobe.com/north to see a photo gallery of My Place by the Sea.

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