

# the thirty-a REVIEW

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# SUMMER ON 30-A

# Black Bear Bread Company is Expanding

BY MARY WELCH

There's a saying that if something is working; make it bigger and better! That's exactly what the owners of the super popular Grayton Beach Black Bear Bread Co. bakery are doing: opening Bar Room, adding another dimension with additional seating, an expanded menu, and wine and craft beer.

Bar Room, located next door to the Black Bear Bread Co., features an enhanced menu, including sustainably harvested farm-raised Gulf Coast oysters, wine-driven snacks & sharables, cheese, shrimp cocktail, beef tartare, charcuterie, and a wine bar showcasing natural and biodynamic wines. The two eateries work side-by-side as patrons can get Black Bear's menu all day, while the Bar Room's menu and bar opens at 11 a.m. Both close at 5 p.m.

The Bar Room is the natural extension of Black Bear Bread Co.'s success and the ambitions of Chef/Proprietor Phillip McDonald and Proprietor Dave Rauschkolb. Rauschkolb relates, "We've known each other a couple of decades; we're surfing buddies. I've always wanted to collaborate on a restaurant with Phil because I was always impressed with his talent, leadership, and creativity. It was a natural progression to move forward with a restaurant venture and I already had this building."

The stars aligned. McDonald moved back to his hometown and decided to open a cafe/bakery. "The bakery niche hadn't been filled... well... not with the type of bread we wanted and liked, such as sourdough bread that you get on the west coast."

They opened 1½ years ago (the day of the eclipse) and the cafe was quickly embraced. The goal was to make freshly-baked naturally leavened bread, with seasonal produce that was sensibly sourced. The cafe is perfect for a quick breakfast, lunch on-the-go, or lingering to have a lively conversation or do some work. Of course, a huge part of its success is the outstanding food and baked goods. There's a good reason for that! Debbie Swenerton, head baker of the Black Bear Bread Co., was named a semifinalist in the 29th annual James Beard Restaurant and Chefs Awards in the Outstanding Baker category.



Dave Rauschkolb and Phillip McDonald

While the pair is grateful for the community's support, they are quick to point out the "amazing creative team" working to make it all happen. McDonald's wife, Madra, handles PR and social networking, Jake Meyer helps with logos and branding, while Rauschkolb's wife Carol and Libby Baker collaborated on the interior designs. "You never can do it all by yourselves and we had a really great team. I think that's one of the reasons why we were so busy straight out of the gate. In fact, Black Bear Bread Co. is so popular it will open a restaurant at the new Hyatt Place Sandestin at Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach.

Black Bear's all-day menu includes steel cut oatmeal, alai bowl, egg and cheese biscuit, tartines, soups and sandwiches. Accompanying these culinary delights is Stumptown Coffee Roasters, a cult favorite for coffee aficionados.

"We're expanding," says McDonald. "We're operating a nice bar and will offer natural and biodynamic wines. We'll have a variety of wine types, as well as wines from Slovenia, Germany, Italy, the U.S. and Canary Islands. It'll be a fun and educational bar."

McDonald is proud that they will offer wines with fewer added ingredients and minimal intervention from winemakers. "Many of our wines will not even be filtered and will have no sugars, no additives or minimal sulphates. "I really believe that wines should come with an ingredient label. Sometimes wines have a lot of things in them that aren't good for you. It's good to have clarity



Oysters on the Half Shell



Wine & Champagne Offerings

about what you're drinking." Price points for wines will range from \$10 to \$17 a glass and \$25 to \$150 for a bottle.

The menus for both sides of the eatery change with the seasons and McDonald is always integrating new things. In the upcoming weeks, patrons should expect tomatoes. "Tomatoes are getting ready to come in and we'll be swimming in tomatoes," McDonald laughs. "It's the produce and ingredients that inspires and motivates us."

While it may seem that the 5 p.m. closing is a bit early, don't worry. The Bar Room will be available for private parties and catered events. The combined rooms will seat about 100 for an event; the Bar Room about 40 to 50.

"It's so beautiful at night and perfect for an event space," Rauschkolb says.

**Black Bear Bread Co. is located at Logan Lane, Unit G, Santa Rosa Beach, FL, 32459. Phone is (850) 213-4528. Hours are Monday- Saturday: 7 a.m. - 3 p.m.; Sunday, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.; The Bar Room: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. The website is [www.blackbearbreadco.com](http://www.blackbearbreadco.com).**