

# Northfield Niche

*Since 1995, Ventura's Offshore Café has been a local favorite for food and fun*

By Ray Schweibert

**W**ITH AN ATTACHED PACKAGE-GOODS store, its own signature draft beer, a selection of wines from around the world, a fireplace-equipped dining room, a semi-secluded banquet room, a menu that runs the gamut and a bevy of bar accoutrements, it's safe to say that Ventura's Offshore Café aims to please all who enter.

If you can think of anything that would make the establishment more appealing to the desk jockey want-

main entrance, and the immense, high-ceilinged dining room to the right. Wishing to be identified only by their first names, George and Bob noted that Ventura's Offshore Café is a far cry from its forerunner.

"Don't get me wrong, The Rugby was a nice place for what it was, but Lou poured a lot of time, energy and money into making this place what it is today, which is much nicer than The Rugby," says George. "And through all the construction and renovations,

PHOTO BY ROB ENGLISH



ing to unwind with a couple drinks after a tough day, or the large family with some finicky faces to feed, owner Lou DiVentura Jr. and his staff would likely be open to suggestions.

DiVentura bought what was a functional but far-from-fancy watering hole named The Rugby in 1995. Having owned (and still owning) Ventura's Greenhouse in Margate for nine years prior to that, and as the progeny of the owners of Mama Ventura's in Voorhees since the 1960s, DiVentura was well schooled in how to run a successful restaurant/bar. He spent two years expanding, renovating and modernizing the Shore Road establishment, keeping it operational all the while it was under reconstruction. Ventura's Offshore Café has a total seating capacity of about 250 patrons, with plenty of on-site parking to accommodate them.

On a recent Thursday afternoon, two 70-something friends and longtime Northfield residents enjoyed a beer at the pristine bar, which seats about 30 and is flanked by the partitioned banquet room left of the

**Ventura's Offshore Café offers a great bar, its own signature draft beer and plenty of friendly faces.**

he just blocked off certain sections and kept the business going."

The establishment was called Jerry's Inn prior to The Rugby, notes Joe, a Northfield resident since 1938, and affirms that it remains the unpretentious, welcoming dwelling it has been since its origin.

"Regular people come here," says Bob. "The guy behind the bar [Rich Crosson] has worked here since it was The Rugby. They treat you right, they give you good food and plenty of it for the money."

All dinner entrees at Ventura's Café are reasonably priced, at least stacked up against the average casino restaurant. Not surprisingly, Mama Ventura's in Voorhees survived so long largely on its exceptional reputation for Italian food, primarily mussels marinara. Ventura's Café follows that lead with a wide-ranging selection of pastas and pizzas. You can purchase jars of its signature

marinara sauce in its package-good store. There is also a sizable selection of bar foods, burgers, wraps, subs and salads on the menu.

Food and drink specials change daily at the bar, which is equipped with six 42-inch flat-screen TVs, making it ideal spot for fall football watching. To sweeten that deal, bar patrons can fill out entry

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forms for a drawing to win two VIP seats to the Eagles-Giants game Sunday, Nov. 9, at Lincoln Financial Field in Philly. More details will appear on the company Web site ([www.venturascafe.com](http://www.venturascafe.com)), or by asking the bartender.

"We'll also be doing prize giveaways and half-priced appetizers every Sunday to try to encourage more football fans to come in and watch the games," says Ventura's manager Jamie Franzoni.

Sunday specials will also include \$2.50 Bloody Marys, \$2 domestic and \$3.50 imported pints, and \$2 Bud, Bud Light and Michelob pitchers. Other fall bar specials will include \$4 cosmopolitans and sour-apple martinis every Monday; half off all wine on the menu every Tuesday; martini specials all day every Wednesday; \$2 Corona and Corona Light and \$1 off 16-ounce margaritas every Thursday; and

\$2 Coors Light bottles every Friday.

When available Sunday through Thursday, parties of 25 to 75 people can reserve Ventura's banquet room, which can be made nearly isolated from the rest of the establishment by sliding framed-glass doors. On this Thursday a rehearsal dinner buffet was scheduled. Several fund-raising events have been hosted on site (or contributed to monetarily), as attested by the numerous 'thank-you' notes posted on the company Web by benevolent organizations such as Operation Smile, Children's International, the Knights of Columbus, St. Baldrick's Foundation and AtlantiCare. ■

**Name:** Ventura's Offshore Café

**Address:** 2015 Shore Rd., Northfield

**Phone:** 641-5158

**Details:** Regular hours are 11am-2am daily. Ventura's has different drink specials daily throughout the fall, along with half-priced appetizers and a free hot-and-cold buffet at the bar during Happy Hour (Mon.-Fri., 4-6pm). New additions include \$4 house cosmopolitans and sour-apple martinis every Monday, half-priced appetizers and \$2 pitchers of Bud, Bud Light and Michelob Ultra all day Sunday. Ventura's also has a package-goods store with an extensive wine selection. It has its own signature beer on tap, Ventura's Offshore Ale, marketed through Flying Fish Brewery of Cherry Hill. It owns one of only two plenary liquor licenses in Northfield, the other belonging to Atlantic City Country Club.

**On the Web:** [www.venturascafe.com](http://www.venturascafe.com)