



BY SHARON HARRIS-ZLOTNICK

Offshore Right On

The Ventura name adorns several southern New Jersey restaurants, and the Offshore Café in Northfield is one of the most popular. The casual eatery has a faithful following, and it is not unusual to see three dining rooms filled with families, groups and singles.

Owner Lou Ventura Jr. is a descendant of a prominent restaurant family. His grandparents, Giuseppe and Carmella, emigrated from Italy to New Jersey in 1956 and opened their first pizzeria with their five sons.

Lou Sr. relocated to Atlantic County, and has operated Ventura's Greenhouse in Margate since the 1980s. Young Lou worked there until his mid-20s. In 1995 he bought the old Rugby Inn, and renamed it the Offshore Café.

The 8,000-square-foot building has the feel of a casual lodge, from the front porch and boardwalk outside to the wood-paneled floors and walls inside. A large brick fireplace sits under large windows that provide bright light during the daytime.

Ventura's Offshore Café has a jovial, cheery ambiance, especially at the 40-seat lounge, where four televisions surround the bar. Customers can enjoy happy-hour complimentary pizzas and hot items every weekday from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday is Martini Night, Thursday is Margarita Night and "Ultimate Cocktail Specials" will soon be introduced on weekends.



VENTURA'S OFFSHORE CAFÉ
2015 Shore Road, Northfield
609-641-5158

Three dining rooms have additional seating for 170. Executive Chef Nick Pedano Jr. estimates they serve 700 meals per day on busy weekends. The full menu is available throughout the day.

He says, "We take our food seriously, using the same recipes for our four DiItalia sauces that the Ventura grandparents brought with them from Italy. The key is consistency,

and we constantly taste and adjust the flavor. We make 20 gallons of marinara every day."

Pedano adds specials each day, including a daily fresh fish.

Ventura's Offshore Café offers a wide variety of food items, and diners may order appetizers, soups and salads priced from \$5.95 to \$14.95. The Giuseppe's Special, a 12-pound portion of their signature mussels, costs \$39.95. Hot or cold sandwiches and burgers range from \$4.95 to \$10. House specialties, including fish, poultry, ribs and steaks, start at \$16 and reach \$39.95 for their new Surf n' Turf.

Nineteen pasta specials use many of Ventura's well-known sauces combined with seafood, veal, chicken and vegetables, priced from \$11.50 to \$24.50. For dieters, sautéed spinach or broccoli may be substituted for \$5.25. A \$12.50 Atkins burger platter is available.

The happy-hour pizza whets the appetite for gourmet pan pizza choices (\$6.95 to \$14.95), from the exotic Hawaiian to the new Margarita. More than a dozen toppings may be added for \$3 each.

Ventura's Offshore Café is open from 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to midnight on weekends. The bar opens at 10 a.m. every day but Sunday, when the entire restaurant opens at 11 a.m. No reservations are accepted.

Ventura's accepts all major credit cards. Parking is free and takeout of all items is available. Smoking is only permitted in the bar. Ventura's has an adjacent fully stocked package goods store.

CHEF'S CORNER



Nicholas C. Pedano, Jr.
Executive Chef
Ventura's Offshore Café

Classic Surf & Turf with baby red potatoes and asparagus wrapped in pepper ring

Ventura's uses certified Black Angus beef for this dish, but you can substitute any high-quality filet if you are trying this recipe at home.

Ingredients: (serves 1)
8oz. lobster tail
10oz. filet
3-4 baby red potatoes
Asparagus
Red and yellow peppers
Melted butter, olive oil

To Prepare:

Grill the steak to your liking

Split lobster tail down the middle and remove meat from shell. Baste with melted butter and broil until the top is golden brown, approximately 10 minutes.

(Note: the shell can also be cooked with the lobster and presented upside down with the tail meat on top.)



Blanch asparagus in boiling water for about a minute. Sauté asparagus in butter and season with salt & pepper. Vegetables should be cooked but firm.

Cut peppers into rings and quickly blanch. Plate wrapped around asparagus.

Peel potatoes just down the center (turned). Boil for 20 minutes and finish in sauté pan with olive oil, rosemary and salt and pepper.

Garnish with lemon wedge.