

SHAG-A-RIFIC, baby!

by MICHELLE ROBERTS MATTHEWS | photography by WILLIAM COLGIN

This is much more than a harbor hangout

Eating at a restaurant like Shaggy's is an experience that's easy to take for granted if you live on the Coast. Perched atop stilts, right on the Pass Christian Harbor next to the yacht club, Shaggy's is a super-casual, laid-back, kid- and dog-friendly hangout. But the best part is, the food is much better than it would have to be in such a setting. In fact, it's downright spectacular.

The restaurant is completely open, with the blinds rolled up to let the breeze blow in off the Sound. Even if you're not lucky enough to snag a seat on the deck

that wraps around two sides, you are possibly even luckier because you're sitting in the shade. Still, the view from outside is truly breathtaking, with boats going in and out of the marina and a 180-degree view of the water.

The restaurant has a Caribbean theme and feel, and every other Sunday, Shaggy's hosts "Reggae on the Roof," which can mean a wait for a table even in the middle of the afternoon. The reggae music is the perfect backdrop for the menu, the cold beer and the drink specials. Check the music schedule on the Web site for live performances, which are held downstairs.

Shaggy's has a tin roof and exposed rafters, with a bar jutting out into the main dining room. The shorts-and-T-shirt-clad wait staff is especially friendly, and my waitress on a Sunday afternoon very helpfully recommended the char-grilled oysters. I'm not a huge oyster fan, but every other tray I saw coming from the kitchen was topped with a dozen oysters prepared in different ways. The char-grilled ones are baked in garlic and lemon juice and topped with melted Parmesan cheese. They are served on the half-shell atop a bed of rock salt and



top | Jumbo lump crab and mango salad with mint vinaigrette is a Shaggy's favorite.

bottom | Enjoy a relaxing casual atmosphere on the deck overlooking the Pass Christian harbor.

SHAGGY'S HARBOR BAR AND GRILL

120 S. Hiern Ave., Pass Christian
Phone: (228) 452-9939

Hours:

Open daily at 11 a.m.

Price range:

Dinner for two,
with appetizers, \$60

Dress: Very casual

Web site: www.shaggys.biz



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top | Try the Asian Oysters and top it off with a Caribbean Margarita.



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with a couple of pieces of really good, dense, hot garlic bread. I highly recommend sharing one of the oyster dishes as a starter to any meal at Shaggy's. Another interesting combination, "Oyster Nachos," tops the oysters with bacon, jalapenos and cheddar cheese.

My waitress also recommended the Southern-Style BBQ Shrimp. Seven large Gulf shrimp with tails on were placed atop a mound of rosemary-and-seafood-boil mashed potatoes. The thick, brown sauce was almost like gravy, and the dish came with more of the garlic bread for dipping. It was like heaven on a plate.

But let me go back to the mashed potatoes. They were made from skin-on red potatoes cooked in crab boil, then mashed with bits of sweet crawfish and I'm sure, cream and butter. The combination of those tasty potatoes, the rich sauce and the succulent shrimp made this dish one of the best I've had anywhere.

Other popular choices at Shaggy's are the grilled fish sandwich (mahi-mahi) and the cheeseburger.

I've eaten at plenty of places like Shaggy's, where you go for the atmosphere and not so much for the food. But Shaggy's goes the extra mile by making the food as much a reason to dine there as anything else.

Michelle Roberts Matthews is a freelance writer who enjoys discovering new restaurants — and revisiting old favorites — along the Gulf Coast. 