

eats

Explore 'island casual' dining at Shaggy's

By TAMMY SMITH
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You know this place has to be fun, just based on the color of the building.

Shaggy's Harbor Bar and Grill in the Pass Christian Harbor opened only recently, but it's already developed a loyal following. Some are fans of the departed Tigre's — chef Thomas Genin, co-owner and general manager,



Genin

was the owner of Tigre's (Ron Ladner is also co-owner). Some have become addicted to the black

angus cheeseburgers. Members of both factions told me I needed to check it out. So my dining companion and I did one recent Sunday for lunch.

I later learned from Genin that Shaggy's is named for a Pass Christian bar, Shaggy's Corner, that was housed about 20 years ago at Tigre's location before Katrina.

First of all, don't worry about a dress code. This is casual time. If you're familiar with AJ's in Destin, Fla., that's the vibe you'll get, with a slower Pass Christian flavor. You're seated at wooden picnic tables with saltwater-kissed breezes blowing your way. And if the breezes aren't there, misting fans help keep things cool (there are heaters for the cooler months). Second, be sure to bring cash. At least for now, Shaggy's is a cash-only place.

And don't assume anything about the menu. This place is dedicated to being fun, but



Shaggy's Harbor Bar and Grill is in the Pass Christian Harbor.



Barbecued shrimp and grits in a Creole meunier sauce, with a bloody Mary, was a recent special at Shaggy's Harbor Bar and Grill.

there are some very nice dishes to be had. Consider the appetizer we chose, Wasabi Seared Yellowfin Tuna with seaweed salad and wasabi mayonnaise (\$10). You get velvety slices of cold, seared-just-

right tuna with a generous serving of seaweed salad and drizzles of wasabi mayo. If you've never tried seaweed salad, don't be afraid (it's one of my favorite sides with sushi). Think of it as something slightly pick-

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led to a pretty green, tossed with toasted sesame seeds.

During our brief wait between appetizer and entrees, we enjoyed watching pelicans and other birds fly over the harbor. As dark clouds began rolling our way, the waitstaff scrambled to bring in things from the outside tables, and a couple of them started rolling and tying down clear plastic in case it started raining. Genin told me later it was the first time they had used them.

My entree was grilled lemon-fish, served with black bean salsa and wasabi mashed potatoes (\$15). My dining companion went with the day's special, barbecued shrimp and grits in a Creole meunier sauce, which came with a bloody Mary (\$14.95). He was working later that day, and I wasn't, so I took the bloody Mary (good and spicy).



If you go

Where: Pass Christian Harbor, Pass Christian.
Hours: 11:30 a.m.-until Thursdays through Sundays, 3 p.m.-until on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
Phone: 452-9939.
Etc.: There are boat slips for marine-minded patrons' docking, and live music on weekends. As of now, Shaggy's is cash only.

I'm more familiar with the John Currance/City Grocery version of shrimp and grits, so I was intrigued by Genin's take. Shaggy's gravy appeared to be more roux-influenced than its Oxford relative's. It was a delicious take on the popular dish, and my dining companion managed to sop up every drop of the gravy. The shrimp were big and plump.

My fish, salsa and wasabi potatoes was a great combination. Again, don't be afraid — wasabi was involved, but it was not overwhelming, just a good, warm buzz.

"We're island casual," Genin said. "My business partner and I have been all over the Caribbean, Mexico, the Bahamas. We really emphasize grilled seafood and fresh shrimp. So many people tell me, 'Please don't start frying seafood.' And we don't plan to."

He likes getting his seafood fresh — very fresh.

"Our oysters came from that guy right there," he said, pointing out at the harbor. "We had cedar plank redfish last night, and it sold out. That's my favorite."

And customers clamor for the burgers.

"We sell more cheeseburgers than anything. I'd say they're 60 percent of our orders," he said.

"And our oysters are really cool," he added with a grin.