

## 3 new Lanier area restaurants

### **Antebellum: Southern tradition with a contemporary twist**

By Pamela A. Keene

What could be more Southern than naming a restaurant “Antebellum?” Not much, unless you consider a triple array of deviled eggs as an appetizer or a farm greens salad with pimento cheese and old-fashioned dressing.

That’s just what Nicholas and Alison St. Clair have created in the former location of the Flowery Branch Yacht Club in downtown Flowery Branch. The couple, originally from California, have taken over the restaurant and will be opening in mid-June with avant-garde entrees that blend the best of Southern and contemporary flavors. “I call it preparing old-world Southern flavors in a modern way,” St. Clair said. “We’ll bridge the gap between the two, and people will be reminded of their childhoods, but with a different twist.”

The menu – with only one entrée above \$20 – features grilled wild salmon with a crispy cheddar grit cake, thyme-roasted 12-ounce pork chop with fig-Vidalia onion jam and pecan butter, and fried American catfish with pimento dumplings served with mustard greens and Alabama white barbeque sauce. “I’ve developed some menu items that push the envelope, such as fried green tomatoes with bacon jam, fried egg and hot sauce, and my favorite dessert, a Southern float with popcorn ice cream, Coca-Cola, house-made Cracker Jacks, whipped cream and cherries,” he said. “These are probably the two most ‘out there’ items.”

Antebellum is opening with wine and beer service, but St. Clair said that a full-service bar will be forthcoming. St. Clair has been cooking in restaurants since he was 16 years old. He’s worked in California, Washington State and Georgia. He’s also an avid cook-book collector and has worked with several renowned chefs in the past few years. “Our goal is to use really great ingredients and offer affordable great food,” he said. “We’ll be using local products as much as possible.”

Antebellum will open in mid-June. Hours are Tuesday through Thursday from 5 to 9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 5 to 10 p.m. The restaurant will serve brunch on Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### **Castaways changes ownership, brings fresh casual dining to Lanier**

By Pamela A. Keene

Fish, chicken and burger baskets set the pace for the new Castaways at Holiday Marina. New owner Jean Mallory is tuned in to what people on the lake want from their dining experience. “There’s going to be more of a lake feel here, and we’re keeping focused on good food and good service,” Mallory said. “We’re going to be a fun place to be, where people can get out of the sun for a little bit, have something to eat and then get back out to the lake.”

Castaways will open on Memorial Day weekend. The restaurant will offer daily specials, repeating each week, as well as baskets and other casual dining. The menu will also be built around whatever fresh produce, fish and other items are available each week. “We’re moving toward a farm-to-table experience as the season progresses,” she said. “We’re also going to be very affordable and serve lake-style food.”

Mallory has created several special menu items, including “Mallory’s Chips,” hand-cut potato chips with special toppings. The restaurant will have a full bar and will also serve tropical and frozen drinks.

Owning Castaways is giving Mallory a chance to take a break from corporate America. For more than 28 years, the Ohio native worked in the telecom business in Georgia. “I’ve never owned a restaurant, but as a consumer I know what works,” she said. “The main thing is that we keep focused on service and good food and that we treat people the way we want to be treated.”

**Info:** 678 765-0424

### **Coastal Breeze opens May 7**

By Pamela A. Keene

Coastal Breeze arrives Monday, May 7, in the former location of Third Coast Grille. Owner Erik Nilsen has transformed the building into a contemporary casual restaurant and brought in chef John Butler from the Bonefish restaurant group.

“My goal is to offer a lake-friendly affordable place to dine where people can come in right from the lake and feel comfortable,” Nilsen said. “We’ll have a wide selection of sandwiches to entrees, including fresh grilled fish and steaks, plus pasta and salads in a family-friendly atmosphere.”

Nilsen’s no stranger to the restaurant business. He’s worked in restaurants since he was a teen; he owned his first right after graduating from the University of Georgia, when he purchased Dillon’s in Lawrenceville. He’d worked there for several years and owned Dillon’s for three years before selling it. He then worked for Jeffrey’s sports bar in Alpharetta, helping the group grow to three locations. Then he purchased the Alpharetta location, which he still owns today.

He’s got Lake Lanier experience as well. Several years ago, he opened Key West at then-Starboard Cove Marina in the former location of Up the Creek. He ran the restaurant there for one season then moved it to Braselton. He later sold Key West, which is still a successful eatery.

He decided to revamp the former Third Coast building earlier this year to open Coastal Breeze. Nilsen has repainted and completely redesigned the interior. Corrugated tin decorates the ceilings, the walls are a warm inviting color scheme and the bar and other areas are accented with stacked stone.

The menu is extensive, offering shrimp six ways – including coconut shrimp appetizers and stuffed shrimp as an entrée. Sides include sweet potato fries, asparagus and home-made chips. He’s also created a 15-item menu of \$6.95 lunch specials. Three steak choices and baby back ribs highlight the landlubbers’ section of the menu. Patrons can select crab cakes, pasta and chicken dishes or fish and chips.

The restaurant will open with a full bar. “We’re hoping to become the social place for lake people and area businesses,” he said.

Nilsen grew up in Lilburn and studied information systems at the University of Georgia. He and his wife Shay have a 12-year-old son Tyler, who got to know many of the lake's diners when Nilsen owned Key West. "Tyler would come to work with me and help bus tables," he said. "It got to the point that people were asking if Tyler was working that night. He has a great time." Coastal Breeze will be open seven days a week from 11 a.m. to midnight.

**More info:** 770-945-9181