

Island Bar launches new amenities, same quality customer care

By Jack McLaughlin
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After a year and a half manning the newly-refurbished Island Bar and Grill, the Bowers family has enjoyed 18 months of steady growth, and their success has prompted a full slate of updates and improvements that will be ready by the Summer of 2018.

"We have a really great community here — they've embraced us, and we're having fun when they're having fun," said Christa Bowers, who owns the business with her husband Jim.

The couple purchased the business, located on the Rock River just off the northeast end of Lake Koshkonong, from its previous owner, who, despite the establishment's popularity, was unable to keep

it open consistently due to an ongoing illness.

The Island Bar and Grill likely couldn't have inherited a better pair of owners, judging by how the last year has gone for both them and the Fort Atkinson community. Accolades from 2017 include awards nods for both the Best Steak on Lake Koshkonong and Best Happy Hour, given by the Best of Kosh series.

At the start of the 2017-2018 offseason, the Bowers' took on two new employees to run their kitchen—Justin Blakely and Alex Lee—as kitchen manager and assistant kitchen manager, plus head and sous chefs respectively, a move that paid dividends for the quality of the eatery.

"All of our ribeye is hand-cut to order," said

Jim Bowers, who noted Island applies a demi-glaze in addition to a compound butter to their steaks, which include ribeyes, filet mignon, and sirloin cuts.

In addition to steak, Island Bar and Grill offers a variety of excellent menu items, including burgers, wraps, sandwiches, and appetizers, featuring house-made guacamole, served both as a side order for chips and on wraps and burgers. In addition, the restaurant is currently serving deep-fried slices of avocado, known as avocado fries, one of the only area establishments to offer this delicacy.

Even more, the restaurant offers a full fish fry on Fridays (a menu item that is served throughout the winter and off-season), featuring fried cod, bluegill, plus grilled shrimp and salmon.

Sponsored by the Kona Brewing Company (located in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii), the Island Bar and Grill also boasts a fun-filled outdoor Tiki Bar, featuring an array of fruity, fish-themed drinks and cocktails, in addition to an expanded craft bar list, where patrons can watch the river go by at their own speed on Island's waterfront lawn.

Also new to the summer of 2018 is the addition of 30 new boat slips, which will bring the total to 50. According to the Bowers, space for docking



The Island Bar and Grill will be able to dock up to 50 boats this summer, an improvement over the 25 spaces they had last year. (Photo by Jack McLaughlin)

boats has been one of the most-requested amendments since last year.

Located on the Rock River within a stone's throw of the northeast shore of Lake Koshkonong, the Island stands as a haven for boaters, the perfect stop to enjoy lunch, a drink, some live music, or all three.

Due to its waterfront location, the water around the establishment is a prime fishing zone. "This is the walleye spot in spring and fall," said Jim Bowers.

No matter how you plan to spend your time on the water, the Island Bar and Grill is a place to know, as it is one of the only waterfront locales in the area to offer gas.

What's more, the Fort Atkinson eatery was

voted as Best Happy Hour from Best of Kosh for 2018. The establishment's happy hour, which is served from 3-6 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, features beer buckets, either \$7 for five, or \$7 for 10, depending on the type of brew ordered.

Carrying on from last year, Island Bar and Grill will also offer premier live entertainment. In the warmer months, guests can enjoy live music on the location's water-front outdoor seating area, which features an expanded number of picnic tables and a customized fire pit.

Bands perform throughout the summer from 6-9 p.m. on Friday night, and on Saturday and Sunday from 2-6 p.m. Visiting

artists are also scheduled for indoor time slots during the colder months.

The business will continue to offer 25 hook-up campsites, which receive access to their own boat slip.

And even though the husband-wife team has only owned the business for a year and a half, the couple is no stranger to the Koshkonong area.

"We've lived on the water since 2003 — we've worked here, we've raised our family here," said Christa Bowers.

And by all accounts this is what the Kosh-loving duo will continue to do — listening to both its solid contingency of local customers and out-of-town vacationers alike.

Here's to another productive summer.



Jim and Christa Bowers at Island Bar and Grill. (Photo submitted by Jack McLaughlin)

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