

Joe's Crab Shack highlighted by decor, seafood



a review
Joe's Crab Shack

overall ★★☆☆ out of five

AMY SHANNON Asst. Features Editor

Junk, junk and more junk.

That's one way to describe the decor of Joe's Crab Shack, the new restaurant that replaced D's on the River on Alexander Drive in West Columbia.

Dining at Joe's Crab Shack feels just like sitting in the middle of a giant yard sale that spreads out in all directions. The walls are jam-packed with every doodad, thingamabob and miscellaneous castoff imaginable.

A plastic skeleton bathing in a tub greets guests at the door. On the walls hang license plates, waffle irons, skis, chairs, books, fishing poles, buoys, golf clubs, tapes, rollerskates and a plastic shark with a human inside it, to name a few items.

Hidden among all the junk is some really neat stuff. But you have to look closely to find it.

Add to all this some twinkling Christmas lights, a bouncy, almost hyperactive, staff and loud "feel good" music, and that's the basic atmosphere at Joe's Crab Shack on a packed Saturday night.

Don't be surprised if you see your waiter or waitress doing the "YMCA" or the "Macarena." And if the host



NIKKI THORPE The Gamecock

Joe's Crab Shack employees Roland Van Beverhoudt, Shannon Hilton and Nicole Donnan take a brake after a busy day. Joe's Crab Shack serves a variety of seafood dishes and entrees.

announces that "the goose has no feathers," it means someone in the crowd is celebrating a birthday.

Noise from the music and various sirens roars above the crowd. At first, the blaring sounds, along with the mismatched junk, can be disconcerting since shouting is the only way to communicate above the noise. But after a while, everything seems to grow on you.

On the menu, Joe's Crab Shack offers a variety of seafood such as shrimp, catfish, lobster, oysters and tuna steak. But crabs are definitely Joe's specialty. They serve blue, stone, soft shell, king and Alaskan snow crabs, which can be prepared four different ways.

Most entrees range from \$8 to \$17.

Salads, chicken and pasta are also available.

My companion and I ordered the crab balls appetizer. The crab balls resembled mini crab cakes and came on a bed of seasoned french fries. These delicious thin-cut fries turned out to be addictive.

For dinner, I chose barbecue steamed crab legs. They were some of the best I've ever had. The barbecue flavoring only made them that much better. For side dishes, I received perfectly steamed new potatoes and above average black beans and bacon.

My companion picked the shrimp en brochette, which consisted of grilled shrimp, jalapeno and monterrey jack cheese wrapped in bacon. The shrimp arrived badly burned, to the point of

tasting like charcoal. It was quite unsavory.

But his side dishes, which included fluffy red rice, creamy coleslaw and mediocre mixed vegetables, proved satisfactory.

A more delectable main dish selection might have been the coconut shrimp or seafood enchiladas.

Joe's Crab Shack is extremely crowded on Saturday nights. The heaviest time is between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. Go for a late dinner or on a weeknight, if possible.

Our dinner for two people, with an appetizer and tip, was \$45. However, two people could eat for \$25 without an appetizer since there are many entrees under \$10, and portions are large.

Coolin' off on the river

For those looking for a new hobby, Adventure Carolina offers instruction on canoeing, gear for hiking and other outdoor ideas.

MARCUS AMAKER Features Writer

People are doing more than fishing on South Carolina rivers these days. With the help of Adventure Carolina, a river can provide the ride of a lifetime.

Adventure Carolina, located on State Street in Cayce, offers canoe trips to people of all ages. The 10-year-old organization sponsors trips to a wide variety of places including the Congaree, Edisto and Saluda rivers.

"The canoe trips are really relaxing," Adventure Carolina instructor Cass Agerton said. "People get to see things that other people don't when they go on these trips."

According to Agerton, canoe trips usually last three to four hours and involve a tour guide who shares their knowledge about the surrounding area. Group trips are taken by family and friends for a number of reasons, including birthday parties and school field trips. Participants are required to sign a waiver of liability and watch a video about canoeing before they take a trip.

"These trips offer a brake from the routine of everyday lifestyle," Adventure Carolina employee Jesse Griffin said. "They're fun, especially with family."

In addition to canoe trips, Adventure Carolina gives people the chance to go on kayaking expeditions. Classes are also offered for beginners to learn outdoor skills like hiking, rock climbing and kayaking. According to Adventure Carolina employee Paul Hecker, these classes meet once a month.

"A lot of the guys around here grew up hiking and they love it," Hecker said. "they get other people hooked on it also."

Along with renting out kayaks and canoes for trips, various other outdoor essentials can be bought at Adventure Carolina. They sell everything from backpacks and fishing equipment to just-add-water foods like scrambled eggs and nacho cheese chips. There is also a large collection of books about canoeing, survival tips and the importance of experiencing nature.

"One reason why these trips are so appealing is that a lot of people are getting back to nature and the still water," Hecker said.

Other rivers and waters traveled by Adventure Carolina include Enoree, Tyger, French Board, Wadboo Creek, Sparkleberry Swamp, Ace Basin, historic Rice Fields and some remote coastal beaches. Private canoe trips cost around \$25, and group trips are \$15 per person.

Those who have been on an Adventure Carolina canoe trip say it is a calm experience and a great way to enjoy the summer.

"The trip was a relaxing afternoon," said Columbian Bill Noyes after a canoe trip with his family. "I had a good time."

"The trips aren't fast. It's a great adventure," said Columbia native Robin Lee. "I would definitely do this again."

In 1995, The State recognized Adventure Carolina as the best camping store in South Carolina. Adventure Carolina is a member of the South Carolina Professional Paddlesports Association and the National Association of Canoe Livery and outfitters. Reservations for trips can be made by calling 803-796-4505.

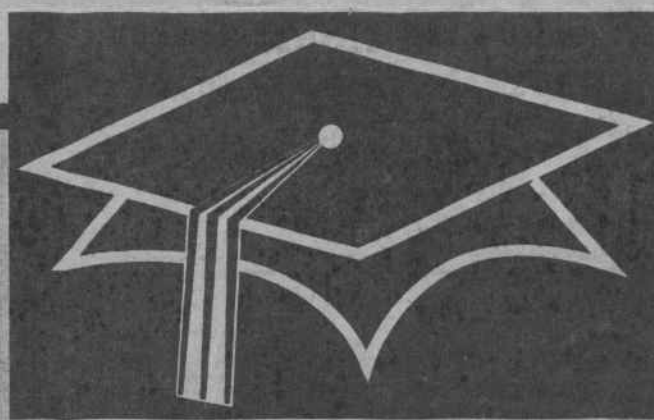
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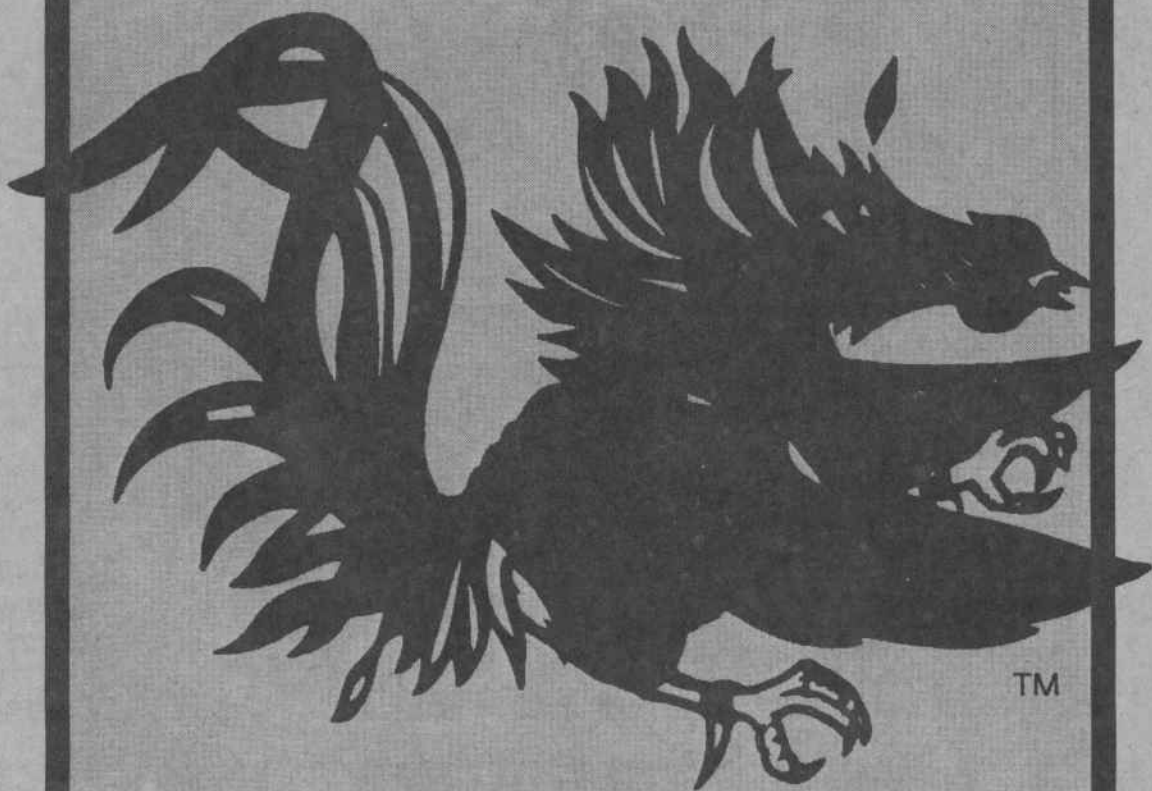
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