

BEACHFRONT VIEWS & MARDI GRAS

The Island City of Galveston is a hot spot for dedicated group dining.

BY BELINDA LICHTY CLARKE

THE ISLAND CITY OF GALVESTON is probably best known for the devastating hurricane in 1900 that killed at least 8,000 residents and is still the deadliest natural disaster to hit the United States, but it also managed to weather Hurricane Harvey. Luckily, Galveston has the second largest historic preservation group in the country, 14 historic museums and houses cared for by dedicated volunteers, and 32 miles of Gulf Coast beaches that are regularly reinvigorated. There's also Mardi Gras Galveston, the third largest Mardi Gras celebration in the United States and the only Mardi Gras to combine stunning beachfront sunsets with New Orleans-quality parades and parties.

"Galveston is a unique and charming place," says Leah Cast, director of communications for Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Nowhere else in the U.S. offers a tropical island setting less than an hour from the fourth largest city in America [Houston]."

The Grand 1894 Opera House

Having survived the great storm of 1900 and a few hurricanes in its time, The Grand is one of a handful of remaining theaters of its era in Texas and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1993, the 73rd Texas Legislature proclaimed The Grand "The

Official Opera House of the State of Texas."

Today, in addition to a variety of public performances, The Grand offers unique meeting space, according to Marketing Director Kathy VanDewalli. Local caterers are available for food and beverage, and in addition to the 1,040-seat theater, the venue offers space for



The Grand 1894 Opera House is a national treasure that local historic groups have maintained and preserved.

PHOTO: THE GRAND 1894 OPERA HOUSE

seated dinners for up to 400, and the 40-foot-by-52-foot Edna's Room can seat 100 with reception space for 250.

"We've had dinner parties on stage using a 'Phantom of the Opera' theme, complete with ground fog and a singer in an upper box," says VanDewalli.

Looking for a venue that is different from your average hotel banquet hall? "Without question, The Grand 1894 Opera House combines traditional Victorian elegance with Southern comfort," says Rosemary Lindley, program director, John P. McGovern Academy of Oslerian Medicine, who has booked The Grand for events.

Gaido's

San Giacinto Gaido, Gaido's founder, first started serving his fresh fish and shucked-by-hand bay oysters and gulf shrimp in 1911. While times have certainly changed, Gaido's rich tradition of fresh seafood and attention to detail remains today. Private dining is Gaido's specialty, with eight rooms to offer corporate planners. Three of the private rooms offer Gulf views.

According to Nick Gaido, president of Gaido's, "we are a great choice for group dining because of our commitment to fresh seafood and our commitment to the entire guest experience," Gaido explains. "We offer a variety of plates and buffet options for our guests. Most of the items offered come straight from our regular menu including Snapper Michael and other fish, crab cakes, Chicken Ponzini and gulf shrimp."

Blake's Bistro, San Luis Resort Spa and Conference Center

Blake's Bistro is probably best known for its oversized window front seating and outdoor poolside dining overlooking the beach. With capacity for 130, it's perfect for large or small groups with a variety of buffet options that offer streamlined dining with separate salad and dessert bars, as well as a designated carving station, according to David Townsend, director of convention and conference planning at The San Luis Resort.

"Blake's Bistro serves as the dedicated res-



Top: Gaido's offers fresh seafood and private dining, with eight rooms of various sizes. Bottom: Blake's Bistro is perfect for large or small groups and has a variety of buffet options that offer streamlined dining for groups.

taurant for the resort's meetings and conference guests," says Townsend. "The San Luis Resort is a member of the IACC, so many of our guests opt for a flexible meeting package that includes conference meals. Blake's Bistro holds true to IACC standards, which call for high quality, internationally influenced cuisine. At Blake's Bistro, guests will find an innovative selection of dining experiences."

A recipient of the AAA Four Diamond Award since 1999, the 32-acre resort offers lav-

ish accommodations, breathtaking Gulf views and unmatched personalized service. 📞

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sanluisresort.com/restaurants.asp | 800.392.5937

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