



Chefs International keeps the Jersey Shore's hot spots going

BY SEAN O'BRIEN
NIGHT AND DAY



There are many places to choose from at the Jersey Shore when it comes to dining or going out for drinks. Any member of the Chefs International family of restaurants is a solid choice, as they make up some of the area's most popular hot spots.

Chefs International thrives on diversity in its restaurants. Where some owners might open multiple bars with the same style and theme, Chefs International's restaurants incorporate a variety of styles and themes with one consistent aspect throughout all its restaurants: providing delicious food in a friendly and relaxing atmosphere.

A STORIED HISTORY

Jack Baker, founder of Chefs International, is a Jersey Shore native. Hailing from Point Pleasant Beach, Mr. Baker started his work in the restaurant industry with his father, Barkos. They fished for lobsters and eventually opened a small restaurant in their hometown, in the same location as today's Lobster Shanty. Word spread

of this small, but amazing, restaurant in Baker's town — and with a wealth of demand, the Bakers began to expand their business.

Despite the name "Shanty," none of Chefs International's restaurants are at all shanty-like. Instead, they feature upscale and modern decorations, lighting, and architecture.

Jack Baker retired as president of Chefs International in 1988. The current president, Bob Cooper, credits everything Chefs International has become to Jack Baker's hard work, determination, and passion.

Cooper also credits Anthony Paplia, who served as president after Baker, with teaching him the necessary administrative and leadership skills necessary to continue the legacy of Chefs International.

Chefs International has a strong tie to the Jersey Shore community. Baker

and Cooper are both native to the area. Chefs International's restaurants have become household names at the Jersey Shore, and part of that could be attributed to their strong community ties. They tend to hire a lot of local teenagers and 20-somethings for the summer and other jobs, and help instill values of hard work that got Chefs International to where it is today.

Until 1999, Chefs International was publicly owned. The Lombardi family now owns Chefs International and wishes to continue the legacy of the company and its restaurants being household names.

The many restaurants that fall under the name of a Chefs International property range in styles.

BAKER'S WATER

STREET BAR & GRILL

Baker's Water Street Bar and Grille is located at 4 Robbins Parkway in Toms River. This beautifully decorated wharfside restaurant provides an excellent meal in an intimate setting.

Located right on a marina, the Water Street Bar and Grille provides entertainment on the weekends, daily

specials, and dockside dining. Water Street is also a great sports bar. With two great bars to watch the games, you can't go wrong with a night of dinner and drinks at Water Street.

MOORE'S TAVERN

Moore's Tavern is another great sports bar owned by Chefs International. Located at 402 West Main Street in Freehold, Moore's Tavern is a great place to meet for the game. Whether it be with friends or family, Moore's offers a dining experience that is great for all to enjoy.

The tavern was fully renovated in 2009 and now boasts 14 HDTVs. The cozy atmosphere still provides the warmth and rustic feel of an 18th-century tavern, but with all the modern renovations allow customers to enjoy a comfortable and fresh setting.

SUNSET BALLROOM

The Sunset Ballroom is another Chefs establishment on Channel Drive in Point Pleasant Beach; this one is more of a banquet hall.

It is available for special occasions. With an excellent view of

the water, the Sunset Ballroom offers perhaps one of the most elegant spots for an event. Weddings, showers, birthdays, and luncheons are among the many uses for the Sunset Ballroom.

Banquet dining with seafood, steak, and chicken choices is offered, as is buffet-style dining for occasions that do not involve a formal sit-down dinner.

Chefs International also has a host of contacts, including DJs and bands, that will help provide the best entertainment for your special occasion. Be sure to schedule an appointment to see the beautiful facility.

WHARFSIDE RESTAURANT & PATIO BAR

The Wharfside Restaurant and Patio Bar is the Sunset Ballroom's neighbor, located at 101 Channel Drive in Point Pleasant Beach. The restaurant is a great place to enjoy dining on the water.

The outside Patio Bar, tucked just behind the restaurant, is the real shining star of this Chefs International location. The casual location offers a haven from the thick beachgoing crowd of tourists and invites everyone inside, yet locals seem to be the majority of the crowd.

The Patio Bar is a great place to grab a drink and some food in a casual setting right on the water. They offer a small menu that hits every avenue, from seafood to grilled items to pizza. They also host some of the Jersey Shore's hottest bands for happy hour acoustic shows and late night rock and dance parties.

ESCONDIDO MEXICAN CUISINE & TEQUILA BAR

Escondido Mexican Cuisine & Tequila Bar is one of the more specialized and unique locations owned by Chefs International.

Located at 402 West Main Street in Freehold, Escondido has been



preparing the freshest and best Mexican cuisine for over 14 years.

Serving tender herbs, crisp garden vegetables, and hand-cut meats, Escondido is the place to get some of the tastiest Mexican food in Monmouth County.

At the Cantina at Escondido, you can enjoy rare bottles of tequila in a fun, lively atmosphere. With over 200 agave-based spirits, this location provides an exotic escape located right in our backyard.

9TH AVE PIER

Chefs International's latest venture is one of Belmar's newest and hottest bars: 9th Ave Pier, right on the Shark River.

Another casual environment, similar to that of the Patio Bar, 9th Ave Pier is a beautiful spot to grab a drink with friends in the summer. They offer light salads, dips, and chips, as well as hearty burgers and fresh seafood.

9th Ave Pier also boasts a large drink menu, from beer and wine to great mixed drinks. You have got to go for the rum bucket; the Miss Belmar is always a fantastic choice.

With an excellent view of the marina in Belmar, 9th Avenue Pier is one of the best places to enjoy drinks and food while listening to great live entertainment in the sun.

THE LOBSTER SHANTY

The Lobster Shanty is Jack Baker's original restaurant. Located between Channel Drive and the Manasquan River, The Lobster Shanty is an elegant escape for those looking to enjoy the freshest seafood and steak in town.

The famous locally caught lobster is at the heart of the foundation of Chefs International — be sure to try it soon!

BAKER'S AMERICAN BAR & GRILLE

All-American fun and food is the focus of Baker's American Bar & Grille, located on Route 33 in Monroe.

Burgers, brick oven pizzas and more, as well as a fully loaded bar and great views of TVs from every seat, make this remodeled restaurant a great location to stop by any night.

Sunday is a particularly good one to stop by — prime rib dinners are only \$13. You just can't beat that.

A FAR REACH

Chefs International's reach stems beyond New Jersey, keeping Floridians and snowbirds alike happy.

The company also owns two restaurants in Florida — another Lobster Shanty in Cocoa Beach and Mr. Manatee's in Vero Beach.

Chefs International operates some of the best restaurants in the area, and it is all thanks to a hardworking team.

From bartenders to servers, right on up to the president, Cooper, and the Lombardi family, each individual plays a huge role in providing us with a fun and friendly experience.

At its roots, we all have Jack Baker to thank for providing us with some of our favorite local hot spots.