

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Finding New Smyrna

We didn't really find New Smyrna. Town was always there. Just missed her on north or south runs by car or boat. This was our northbound run on 'Helen J'. Late afternoon. From Stuart, Florida that morning. Gorgeous day, not a lot of traffic on the intercoastal, hot and sunny. Couldn't ask for better running. We'd been chatting on the VHF with another boat from Maine earlier on and I spotted them tied up at the New Smyrna park floats as we came under Beach Bridge.

"You folks staying here tonight?" I called.

"No," he radioed back, "If mother spends any more at this art show though, we won't have fuel money enough to get back to Maine."

I laughed, said maybe we'd see them in the great state, turned to AJ and queried, "Another six miles or stop here?" Knew pretty well what the answer would be. Those tents and kiosks set up on the green were a powerful magnet. We both enjoyed art shows so with minimal discussion we wheeled the 'J' around (6 knots) and slipped back under the bridge with the ebbing tide to a small anchorage on the eastern side of the waterway. Anchoring along the intercoastal waterway or ICW can be just a dite tricky. You'll see perhaps a half dozen boats and think, "Aha, good spot," only to poke in and find these six occupy the only deep hole around. But with a bit of poking about and shorter than normal chain rode we got the Danforth down in 6-plus feet. The 'J' is a great boat for skinny southern waters with her 3 foot draft.

We quickly showered, slipped the inflatable over the side, set the five-horse up and motored back up stream. Luckily for our depleting purse the art show had by now pretty well folded up for the evening. We wandered a bit, looked at a few things and got to talking with a young Chinese artist from New York who in fine entrepreneurial spirit tried to interest us in an after hours twofer sale. We thought briefly (he did have some nice pieces) but the 'J's bulkheads were already well arted so we had to pass.

First order of battle on dry land is generally a good long walk for our 'aerobic' health. We managed two blocks at a fast pace before the notes of a saxophone playing light jazz riffled through the humidity laden evening air. This begged investigation. With just a bit of trepidation AJ took my hand and led the way through a beautiful garden with ramps, ponds, and neat waterfalls to the back deck of an art studio. What else? There, a white fedoraed gentleman shook our hands and welcomed us to "first Saturday," explaining that all the art studios (20+/-) in adjoining area had open house on the first Saturday of each month. End of that healthy walk.

After about two hours of good, bad, and unfathomable art, beaucoup marginal wine and cheese and meeting some really neat folks who were clearly high on New Smyrna, we slipped over to the main street of this sleepy, small-growing-larger, Florida town for some real food.

In true fashion AJ had asked a few in the crowd for the names of good eateries within walking distance. There were two. We settled on Mahoney's. Great choice. Sit at the bar or those high altitude mini tables with chairs? We chose the bar. Another good choice. Jim Bahs the owner and an ex-New Englander, was doing the cooking that night as well as tending bar. Jim had just recently set up Mahoney and had installed steam kettle cooking. Neat setup. Clients could order from a wide variety of soups or chowders. He'd put the ingredients into a container, slip it into the steam kettle cooker and in short order set a bowl in front of us which we shared. Seated next to us was a gentleman who had to be on the off-payroll of New Smyrna Chamber of Commerce. Not only did Lee Oster tell us what was best on the menu, (I had the burger and AJ coconut shrimp) but went on to extol in some length the many virtues of New Smyrna. Not only that, he offered and we accepted a tour of town and the beachfront. Talk about a nice guy.

He'd lost his wife of many years that winter and his grief still crept in around the edges. He drove us through various neighborhoods, pointed to houses for sale, knew the asking prices, drove us by points of interest and then asked us to see his house. It was well dark when Lee dropped us at the dinghy dock for the short ride to the boat. I think as we lay there in the vee-berths that evening we were almost too overwhelmed to talk though we did agree that New Smyrna, Florida would be worth spending some more time in. With such enthusiastic people it has to be fine wine.

Southern Ribs
(serves four)

2 full slabs baby back ribs	1 1/2 tablespoons dry mustard
3 tablespoons canola oil	1 tablespoon ground black pepper (fresh)
3 tablespoons paprika	1 1/2 tablespoons cumin
1 teaspoon ground chipolte	2 tablespoons kosher salt
1 1/2 tablespoons garlic powder	3 tablespoons brown sugar
1 1/2 tablespoons onion powder	

Create a rub by combining all dry ingredients. Coat ribs with oil and sprinkle both sides with rub, covering completely. Grill over low heat for 4 1/2 to 5 hours.

Fair winds and good roads.

Lee S. Wilbur