

A Lowcountry Weekly Guide to bar hopping the Historic District



PART ONE: THE WATERFRONT

Story and photos by Mark Shaffer

“The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy”... says that the best drink in existence is the Pan



Galactic Gargle Blaster, the effect of which is like having your brains smashed out with a slice of lemon wrapped round a large gold brick. – Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

I've not noticed the Pan Galactic Gargle Blaster on any local cocktail menus recently, but I'm guessing that if you walked into to some of these establishments and ordered one, you might just get it – or a reasonable facsimile thereof. Beaufort is, after all, known to be a quaint little drinking village with a fishing problem. That means there are plenty of options to consider when cocktail hour rolls around and quite a few more that open considerably earlier.

What follows is a breakdown of some of our favorite Beaufort watering holes. Keep in mind the list is not complete – so many bars, so little time. We'll stick to the waterfront in this outing with

pretty much everything else to follow in Part Two. Sure, the task at hand seems never-ending and yet we remain committed to it. And that's just the brand of journalistic commitment you can expect from this column because if you can't find the truth in a bar, where the hell can you find it? Let us begin.

Hemingway's

920 Bay St. (843) 521-4480

www.hemingways.org

Open daily at 11:00am.

"Always do sober what you said you'd do drunk. That will teach you to keep your mouth shut." - Ernest Hemingway



Papa would approve of his namesake watering hole for a lot of reasons. Chief among them is character. The bar's loaded with it. Located in a subterranean corner of the magnificent Thomas Law Building, beneath the huge columns and impressive palmettos Hemingway's is a first class dive bar - and this is no bad thing. In fact, this makes Hemingway's unique in Beaufort and the bar of choice for local Food Service Industry professionals. This is where bartenders, servers, chefs and line cooks come to drink. On an average night you might need a shoehorn and a can of Crisco to squeeze into the joint. It's also the perfect spot for a pre-lunch eye-opener or one of the bar's famous custom Bloody Marys in the shade of the pergola on the breezy dog-friendly patio. According to the staff it's been scientifically proven that Hemingway's is at least 10 degrees cooler than any other bar in the summer and significantly warmer in winter.

The actual bar – crafted from salvaged heart pine – seats half a dozen patrons with a few tables along the whitewashed brick wall. The place is festooned with an impressive accumulation of autographed currency – an old sailor's tradition. Back in Beaufort's movie-making days this was a hangout for stars and crew alike. The "Wall St." subway sign from "Die Hard: With a Vengeance" hangs on the wall. A faux gold brick from the film sits behind the bar. Happy hour runs from 5-7 daily (bring cash) with 50 cents off beer and \$1.50 off liquor and the usual cheap shots, so to speak. Sundays feature live music, exotic adult beverages, complimentary snacks for humans and pets alike (doggie snowcones!), and corn hole. Pretense is strictly forbidden. Fun is mandatory.

Luther's Rare and Well Done

910 Bay St. (843) 521-1888

Find them on Facebook

Open 11 am daily



Sam: What'll you have, Normie?

Norm: Well, I'm in a gambling mood Sammy. I'll take a glass of whatever comes out of that tap.

Sam: Looks like beer, Norm.

Norm: Call me Mister Lucky.

– from "Cheers"

If in some parallel universe Cheers was transported from Boston to Beaufort you'd find Norm Peterson and Cliff Claven arguing over "Final Jeopardy" right here. In fact, Luther's has a serious Cheers vibe to it, only with a terrific view of the river, pet-friendly deck and more of The

Corps. The Marine Corps flag flies over the shady pet-friendly deck and families pack the place during graduation weekends at Parris Island. The Corps motto "semper fidelis" or "always faithful" certainly applies to Luther's crack team of regulars. You'll find the usual suspects polishing the same bar stools on any given day swapping war stories, fish tales and more than a few lies. If you're a regular here – or even a semi-regular – your usual is in front of you before your butt's on the stool.



The place even looks a bit like Cheers although the big rectangular bar is curiously split level with one half higher than the other, a reminder of the building's long history as the town pharmacy. Portraits of the former owners Charles and Julie Luther hang on the east wall. A sign beneath them reads, "You can't drink all day unless you start in the morning." This is a fact the faithful have taken to heart. Mrs. Luther appears to be less than approving.

When the weather cooperates the massive windows overlooking the park are open to the river breezes. Luther's is one of two spots on the park that double as sports bars. There's a TV strategically placed in every direction. The bar offers a good selection of bottles and taps and is the only place in town you'll find Crispin Cider. There's something going on most nights with trivia on Monday and karaoke each Tuesday and live music Thursday through Saturday. Happy hour is daily from 4-7 with booze & beer discounts. Luther's is a red meat kind of place and Wednesday's burger night is highly recommended as are the steaks and the fall-off-the-bone slow cooked ribs.

Plums

904 Bay St. (843) 525-1946

www.plumsrestaurant.com

Open daily at 11 am



When Plums first opened its doors on Beaufort's waterfront "Top Gun" was blasting away at the box office. Approaching its third decade, the place has aged a lot better than Val Kilmer. Both Plums and its fine dining sister establishment, Saltus, pack in locals and seasonal visitors alike. It's not uncommon to pull up to the bar and strike up a conversation with someone who's been making annual pilgrimages to Beaufort and Plums for decades. I recall a bar conversation with a couple from Chicago who'd been coming to Beaufort every spring for nearly two decades. They looked forward to sitting in the window seats at the bar all year long. "Why here?" I asked, curious. The woman just grinned. Her husband flung an arm out to the view. "Because we don't have that in Chicago," he said. "And here it comes with cold beer and fried oysters." 'Nuff said. That's Plums in a nutshell. When soft shell crabs are in season you've got a better chance of scoring backstage passes to the Stone's farewell show than a bar seat during lunch or dinner rush. But in between it's a great place to enjoy a quiet drink, watch the water and soak up some authentic Lowcountry atmosphere.



www.saltwatergrill.com



[More on Beaufort](#) Many local spots to enjoy a sunset view of the Beaufort River with your

