



“v” is for viridian

...and vittles, view, vacation...

By Katherine Cobbs – Featured in Birmingham Magazine

If it wasn't for the expanse of silky white sand and turquoise water in the distance, those cruising along Highway 30-A in South Walton County might just think they've landed in Miami's South Beach or Palm Springs instead of Seagrove Beach, Fla., thanks to a new landmark at Scenic 395. The “V” restaurant boasts all the lines and curves you might expect from a mid-century architectural masterpiece, yet it's just Phase I of the future Hotel Viridian resort. The resort's plans include two beachfront homes on either side of the large beachside lot across Highway 30-A from the restaurant and boutique hotel suites above and behind the restaurant. The restaurant's rooftop will eventually boast an infinity pool with an expansive view of the Gulf and cabanas on three sides. There are also plans for a full-service spa.

With General Manager Sean Goss, a veteran restaurateur, and Chef David Cunningham, formerly of Commander's Palace, at the helm, V is in capable hands as it hones its farm-to-table craft. All produce and seafood are sourced from within a 100-mile radius of the restaurant. Free-range, grass-fed meats come from farther afield, but the goal is to make the food as much “of the place” as possible.

Dishes are an exercise in restraint with each ingredient a standout in its own right, yet the combinations are inspired. Start with a dozen Apalachicola oysters with a vibrant grating of citrus zest on top and a satsuma-infused mignonette for dipping, or go for the plump miso-crusted diver scallops on a bed of the earthy, locally foraged mushrooms, surrounded by a moat of slurp-worthy, smoky crab broth.

For main courses, the “Walkers” section of the menu offers up Blackened Beef Sliders oozing with melted Gouda sandwiched in diminutive house-made rolls. Condiment cups of sinus-numbing mustard, spice-spiked ketchup and homemade pickles take these burgers over the top. A mini fry-basket makes for a whimsical presentation for the expected side. Craving steak? The Steak Viridian is comprised of three perfectly cooked tournedos of beef on a bed of smashed potatoes loaded with grilled scallions and caramelized cipollini onions. For the less voracious, order up the 8-ounce filet with the V's Tamarind Steak Sauce, which is fruity, flavorful and very much like classic barbecue sauce. Grilled asparagus is just one of the options among the seven sides offered.

The Swimmers” section of the menu is teaming with fresh Gulf seafood, ranging from Fire-Roasted Tile Fish atop pasta with bits of lobster, tomato and asparagus in a buttery tarragon sauce to a perfectly cooked Cast Iron-Seared Triggerfish on a bed of pea risotto. Meuniere sauce ups the richness factor, but it’s nothing a glass of Russian Hill Pinot Noir can’t cut through. Do save room for dessert. Try the Abita Root Beer Floats or the more decadent Dark Chocolate and Blackberry Beignets.

The V does not take reservations, so plan accordingly. Whether you sit indoors or out, every seat boasts a Gulf view and, thanks to forward-thinking developers, always will.