



## Seacoast Eats

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### CR's The Restaurant

A hidden gem of finer dining, CR's The Restaurant (287 Exeter Rd, Hampton, 603-929-7972, [crstherestaurant.com](http://crstherestaurant.com)) a unique menu for all tastes. This includes a variety of seafood, and many warm dishes to make anyone feel at home. The Restaurant caters to the seasons with beautiful and subtle décor. Customers can take a break from the bustle of life with this seemingly secluded setting and enjoy a view of nature's scenery wherever you sit. For larger groups or more privacy for dining, there are multiple options available with curtains to screen off banquet rooms from the rest of the house. Proprietor Chuck Rolecek explained to the Seacoast Scene how his years of restaurant experience have allowed him to perfect CR's The Restaurant.

#### **How long has this restaurant been around?**

This is my sixth restaurant or food service operation. The most notable ones I used to own were in Manchester. I used to own a restaurant called CR's Sparks, which was there for 17 years in Bedford, and then I had Hanover Street Chophouse in downtown Manchester. I even had one in Burlington, Vermont.

#### **What made you want to start this restaurant in particular?**

I had actually tried to retire, and I sold my Manchester restaurants. I found after about nine months that I was bored and that I missed the restaurant business, and I felt it was time to go back to work after driving my whole family crazy. I was familiar with this restaurant because the architect who had done the designing for this one had done the architecture for one I'd owned previously. He had done the architecture for this building in 2002 for a restaurant at the time called Bonta, which was a formal Italian restaurant, kind of expensive. By the time 2014 came around, when I was looking to get back into the business, the restaurant was for sale. I opened CR's The Restaurant in October 2014 as my first venture to the seacoast.

#### **What do you think sets your establishment from others around you?**

I think that first of all we've put a lot of thought and detail into the design and décor of the restaurant. Previously, the bar space was rather small and only had a single function room, and we expanded the bar into a horseshoe shape to suit more people and added a second function room as well for private dining. What sets us apart on the seacoast is the ample parking, because we're not in a strip mall where there's limited or paid parking. The scenery of trees and bushes around help to, so you're not staring at cars or open highways.

#### **What's your personal favorite from the menu? Why?**

I guess I'm still deep down a meat and potato kind of guy—I like our steak frites, which is the French way of doing a steak and French fries, and I find it to a very flavorful way of doing steak. We also have unique ways of cooking chicken, like our brick chicken, which makes the skin real crispy on the outside and the inner meat is tender and moist. We kind of push the envelope on some things.

### **How would you describe the dining environment?**

I get nervous when people ask if we're fine dining, and I say, "You know, we're really not stuffy, or pretentious, or fine dining," but my motto is that you'll feel like it's fine dining while you're here. We give a high level of service and with warmth.

### **Do you have any seasonal specials people can expect?**

We do, we actually change the wine menu about four or five times a year with the seasons, like lighter wines in the summer that go better with just sitting around, unlike the heavier, darker wines that we serve in the winter. With the dining menu, we also change that about five times a year, too; not quite seasonally, but almost since winter is so long. We do more lighter fare, like fish and other seafood, in the summer, and we also open up a patio that's currently covered in snow, but that will be available in warmer months for guests to enjoy. We're also going to have a grill out and serve things off the grill for people out on the patio.

### **What's special about your menu in comparison to others?**

We offer gluten-free options, and you can see in our menu that we also list where we get all of our produce and meat from. It's all local places, and nothing is ever frozen before it comes to your plate. Everything is done just for that night's production. The only thing we use a microwave for is for our chocolate cake, which is filled with a dark chocolate pudding, so you put that in the microwave so it just oozes out of the cake.

### **Who would you most like to serve—celebrity, political figure, alive or dead?**

I'd probably most like to serve someone like Wolfgang Puck, who was a famous chef and restaurant tour, because I'd be interested in what he thought of how we're doing. I would probably come up with some sort of special menu with my chef, who's only 32 years old, and whatever he could come up with that is his specialty, that's what I'd serve Puck.

### **What's an essential skill that keeps you running smoothly?**

It has to be the desire to serve, to please. I try to make our mantra here, "The answer's yes, what's the question?" If you want a special gluten-free bread, or sit at a particular booth or substitute out a side for another one, the answer is always going to be yes. This ability to say yes gives the guest their best experience.