

HAMPTONS®

JULY 20 – JULY 26, 2007

Sheltered FROM THE Storm

Want to get away from your getaway? It only takes five minutes by ferry to escape to Shelter Island's Sunset Beach.
by Colin M. Graham

AS FAR AS MANY HAMPTONITES ARE CONCERNED, going to Shelter Island for dinner makes as much sense as hiking to the top of a Nepalese mountain for a T-shirt; the end result doesn't seem to justify the effort expended. But this couldn't be further from the truth when it comes to the restaurant Sunset Beach. After trying some of the new dishes that chef Willis Loughhead has added to the menu, all I can say is that I would go to the Shelter Island eatery again in a heartbeat, even if I had to swim. The trip from Sag Harbor takes less time than the drive from Southampton to East Hampton, and the ferry ticket costs less than the gas you'd use to get there—not to mention it's one of the most beautiful places to dine on the East End.

We arrived for our 8 P.M. reservation and were shown to a table on the top deck, which afforded a perfect view of the sunset over Crescent Beach. Feeling as if we'd somehow been transported to the South of France, I ordered one of the restaurant's renowned and delicious mojitos, its signature drink, and we settled back to enjoy our appetizers: ceviche, delicately flavored with citrus, white wine, and shallots, and crispy calamari salad served with frisée and a carrot-ginger dressing. Both mimicked the warm summer evening—light and fresh.

After taking a break between courses to enjoy the scenery (and another mojito), we ordered our entrées: moules frites marinières (mussels cooked in white wine with shallots and fries) and swordfish grillée. The presentation of the mussels was superlative. They were served in a covered mussel pot, providing space for discarded shells, with frites in a steel cup with a waxed-paper liner (*très typique!*). The mussels were cooked to perfection, and the frites, when dipped in the broth, couldn't have been better. The swordfish was grilled with just the right amount of lemon to add zest without masking the flavor of the fish.

Every aspect of the meal was so pleasant that we couldn't imagine asking for anything more—that is, until we were brought dessert: a fresh blueberry and almond tarte and a frozen passionfruit soufflé glacé topped with handmade coconut tapioca, which has to be the best dessert I've ever had. (Don't question me on this. Just order it. You won't be disappointed.)

So if you're looking for a place to eat where the food is as delicious as the view is breathtaking, look no further than Sunset Beach. This little slice of paradise couldn't be easier to get to, and once you're there, you'll feel as if you're on a private island. In some ways, that isn't too far from the truth. *Sunset Beach, 35 Shore Road, Shelter Island, 749-2001. H*

