

# This vegetarian restaurant a perfect way to start your day

## DINING FACTS

**Restaurant:** Hibiscus Coffee & Guesthouse  
**Location:** 85 Defuniak St., Grayton Beach  
**Hours:** Breakfast daily, 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.  
**Handicap accessibility:** good  
**Children's menu:** Menu items are appropriate for children  
**Reservations:** not necessary  
**Price range:** Beverages, \$1 - \$3.75; Smoothies, \$4.50; Breakfast entrees, \$4.25 - \$7.25  
**Payment:** major credit cards  
**Telephone:** 231-2733  
**Atmosphere:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Value:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Food:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Overall rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Key:** ★ Average ★★ Above average ★★★ Excellent ★★★★ Extraordinary

## By COLLEEN COFFIELD

Daily News Columnist

GRAYTON BEACH — Hibiscus Coffee & Guesthouse is the kind of place that if I found it on my first day of vacation, I would return there for breakfast every other day. It has a charming atmosphere, reasonable prices, and food that is delicious, and good for you to boot.

The first selling point is the setting. Hibiscus is a bed and breakfast situated in the heart of historic Grayton Beach. The dining room is a small part of what Hibiscus has to offer. There are four rooms in the main building, and another five in Bert's Barn, an additional building next door.

The buildings are set among beautiful gardens that provide a peaceful place to sit on a nice day. Inside, a hodgepodge of mismatched tables make you feel you are having breakfast at someone's home. The walls are decorated with a wonderful collection of vintage plates with scenes of Florida, including longtime tourist attractions such as Bok Tower. There is also other Florida memorabilia, and a number of items that are tributes to the owners' faith.

Service is outstanding. Everyone there is familiar with each item on the menu and specials board. You get a

friendly greeting, food gets to the table quickly, and more likely than not, you will get a hug before you leave. And if you aren't lucky enough to be on vacation, and need your food in a hurry, Hibiscus will happily prepare your food to go.

And you will be eager to hug the cook, after you eat this delicious and healthy food. Hibiscus is a vegetarian restaurant, but is not in your face about it. The food is good and wholesome, and just happens to not include meat. One of my carnivorous dining companions didn't even realize he was eating at a vegetarian restaurant until his fourth visit.

One of the best things I tried was also one of the few times I have tried something that is a meat substitute that was actually as good as the original dish. Biscuits and Gravy was two rounds of light biscuits with a crisp exterior, smothered in a cream gravy filled with nicely seasoned soy sausage. The seasonings and texture of this dish were convincing, and I would definitely go back for more.

One friend who eats there regularly (and there are lots of locals who visit often despite this being a guesthouse) swears by the Waffle Wonderful. It is a golden brown waffle spread with

chunky peanut butter, and topped with fresh fruit, sweetened coconut, pecan pieces and honey. This energy-filled dish is available in a single or double size, and has a vegan option as well.

Another friend always goes for the exceptionally good oatmeal. Served with fresh fruit, pecans and brown sugar, this stick-to-your-ribs dish is a great way to start the day summer or winter. I like to add a touch of milk to mine. Granola is another good cereal option, which, as with most menu items, is served with fresh fruit.

Or you can order the fruit as a meal of its own. We enjoyed fresh apples, strawberries, blueberries, and melon topped with coconut and pecans.

An assortment of pancakes is also on the menu. These are substantial multigrain cakes, with good texture and flavor. Get them filled with chocolate chips, pecans, bananas, or my favorite, blueberries.

Also, be sure to check the board for the quiche or frittata of the day. The recipe varies, but this is what I usually order, and I always enjoy whatever is served. On one visit it was a spinach and feta quiche, and on a more recent visit cheese, eggs, salsa and black beans were featured. The quiches are served in an excellent pastry crust.

If you prefer to sip your breakfast, try on of the smoothies or yogurt shakes. Fruit combinations include mango, pineapple, banana and coconut; strawberry and banana; kiwi, strawberry and banana; and fresh fruit salad. Others include fruit and frozen yogurt, such as the Peach Melba with raspberry syrup, and the Dreamcicle with orange.

For a richer smoothie, try chocolate with banana and frozen yogurt, or a frozen

yogurt-based mochacino. Protein powder can be added for an extra charge.

And to get you going, there is espresso, cappuccino, latte, hot chocolate, hot tea and a good basic no-frills cup of coffee that is very drinkable. Cold beverages include a refreshing herbal raspberry tea, iced cappuccino and orange juice.

There is also an array of pastries worth a look. We tried a large cinnamon roll with a buttery topping, and a big, moist blueberry-

packed muffin.

Hibiscus is someplace I would want to go back to again and again. And if I found it on the last day of that vacation instead of the first, I would be trying to book return tickets as soon as possible.

**Colleen Coffield is restaurant reviewer for the Daily News. She dines unannounced at area restaurants for this column. You may write to her in care of the newspaper at P.O. Box 2949, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549.**



Daily News/DEBI HAUSSERMANN

**Cheri Peebles is the owner of Hibiscus Coffee & Guesthouse in Grayton Beach.**

## A LA CARTE

Here is a list of restaurants Colleen Coffield has reviewed in recent weeks. Included is the restaurant's address, telephone number, overall rating and original publication date of the review.

### MARCH

**March 11:** Georg's German Bakery & Restaurant, 318 John Sims Parkway, Valparaiso; 729-3511.

**Overall rating:** ★★★½  
**March 4:** Havana's, 745 Beal Parkway, Fort Walton Beach; 862-0850.

**Overall rating:**★★★½  
**FEBRUARY**

**Feb. 25:** Nida's Thai & More, 120 North Partin Drive, Niceville; 678-2525.

**Overall rating:** ★★★½  
**Feb. 18:** Hog's Breath Café, 541 U.S. Highway 98 East, Destin;

837-5991.  
**Overall rating:** ★★★  
**Feb. 11:** The Summerhouse Restaurant, 1214 Siebert Drive, Okaloosa Island, Fort Walton Beach; 244-1553.

**Overall rating:** ★★★½  
**Feb. 4:** Seagar's, Sandestin Hilton, 4000 Sandestin Blvd. South; 622-1500

**Overall rating:** ★★★★  
**JANUARY**

**Jan. 28:** No review.  
**Jan. 21:** Mary's Kitchen, 186-G Elgin Parkway, Fort Walton Beach; 863-1141.

**Overall rating:**★★★½  
**Jan. 14:** Ali Baba Grill Café, 550 Mary Esther Blvd., Suite 14, Fort Walton Beach; 986-5555.

**Overall rating:** ★★★½  
**Jan. 7:** Panera Bread, 4220 Legendary Drive, No. F98, Destin Commons, Destin; 837-2486.

**Overall rating:**★★½  
**DECEMBER**  
**Dec. 31:** Year-end review  
**Dec. 24:** Café Tango, 14 Vicki (at County Road 30-A), Santa Rosa Beach; 267-0054

**Overall rating:**★★★★  
**Dec. 17:** Tony's Ristorante, Destin Commons (next to Rave Motion Pictures), Destin; 337-TONY.  
**Overall rating:** ★★★