

The Gulf, Orange Beach

Photography by Michelle Stancil



The Gulf, by developers Johnny Fisher and Shaul Zislin, incorporates the beach with decks and outdoor furnishings.



Architect Courtney Brett designed the facility as essentially open-air with very limited enclosed seating in the upper-level container. The container on the left shelters an open bar with walk-in cooler behind.



A view from a second-level deck shows how The Gulf spills out toward the beachfront.

By Philip Morris



The Gulf, a new restaurant/bar overlooking the Perdido Bay inlet at Orange Beach, has a decidedly kicked-back look. Incorporated into its design are four steel shipping containers – used to make the whole place easy to move.

“Shipping containers have been trendy in the design community for about 10 years,” says architect Courtney Brett of Casburn Brett Architecture in Daphne. “But portability was the key factor here. This site has a master plan for a larger public/private boardwalk and permanent restaurant that hinges on a future renovated seawall, so this might or might not stay. But people like the improvised look. We call it a food truck on steroids,” she adds.

Contrary to expectations, there was no cost advantage to using containers. “If you modified them in a shop, there might be. But working on site took extraordinary craftsmanship by the welders having to make straight cuts while blocking the wind,” Brett says. One container holds the kitchen, a second was cut open for an open-air vestibule, a third for a combined walk-in cooler and open bar and a fourth for enclosed seating on a second level.

Brett points out two key aspects of working with containers: One, they can be hot – especially at the beach – so air-flow and reflective exterior finishes are essential. Two, you can’t treat them like a block of wood – the structure at the corners and edges must be maintained for strength.



In this dusk view, a crowd enjoys the open-air amenities. “People love seeing the containers reused,” says developer Johnny Fisher.