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The secret is out. Blakeman's at Duxbury Beach is now open for dinner. Come get a lobster. You might have to wait for a table, but that shouldn't stop you. Time passes fast when you're having fun.



The Battista family spends each summer at Duxbury Beach, serving up hundreds of seafood dinners and living in an apartment above the restaurant.



Life's a Beach at

# Blake man's

by bonnie jernigan



Located on a sandy spit of land between the ocean and the bay, Blakeman's is a seaside restaurant unlike any other you'll find on the South Shore. The dining room is located in a screened porch of a rustic beach pavilion, and the building itself, which is part of Duxbury Beach Park, is situated at the end of a beach parking lot where more than a thousand cars park on busy summer days.

"This is a completely casual, 'no shirt, no shoes, no problem' kind of place," says Dana Battista, who operates the restaurant and manages the surrounding Duxbury Beach Reservation with his wife Missy.

In summer months the Battistas live upstairs, over the restaurant, with their two daughters—16-year-old Maria and 10-year-old Anna—along with their chocolate lab named Bailey. In addition to operating the restaurant, their round-the-clock responsibilities include everything from operating the parking lot and hiring lifeguards, to helping protect endangered species.

"Living here is like camping with a

## Life's a Beach at Blakeman's

roof," says Missy. "We always sleep with sand in our sheets. But we have the ocean as our front yard and the bay as our back yard."

Blakeman's hasn't changed much since it was first built in 1941. It existed as a lunch counter for over 60 years, serving burgers, sandwiches, and ice cream to sandy beachgoers in flip-flops and up until a few summers ago the grill closed down at 3 p.m. But after watching the sun settle over the horizon on numerous summer afternoons, the Battistas realized that people might also like the option of having dinner at the beach before heading home for the day.

When the Battistas started serving dinner at Blakeman's six summers ago, the unique appeal of the restaurant put it on the map as a unique summer destination for a laid-back party setting.

"It really only involved extending the kitchen hours a bit," says Missy, who formerly worked as the functions manager for White Cliffs Country Club and had a good idea for how it all might work. She broadened the dinner menu with scallops, Island Creek Oysters, and other clambake essentials. The idea was an immediate success.

"People said, 'Hey, this is great, we don't have to worry about cooking dinner for the kids when we get home,'" says Missy.

Soon the little beach shack was taking reservations, and before long folks were driving to the beach just to have dinner. Then boaters got wind of it, and started calling in on cell phones, ordering dinner-to-go. Missy gladly accommodates their requests when she can, and has even been known to wade out to meet them with chowder,



steamers, and lobster rolls.

The Battistas open the restaurant on Father's Day weekend each year and stay open till Labor Day, serving dinner Thursdays through Sundays till 8. Early in the season, and on summer weeknights the Battistas also host functions at Blakeman's that range from high school tennis team banquets, to wedding rehearsal dinners and Sweet 16 parties.

"We worked with a bride from Texas who had grown up spending summers at Duxbury Beach," says Dana. "She flew in on a Tuesday; we met, and pulled together a menu for a Friday night dinner. It was great fun for our wait-staff, because the guests had absolutely no idea how to eat a lobster."

The kitchen at Blakeman's is small, and the dining room seats 50, so even for functions they like to keep the menu simple. Simplicity is the best way to go in rough-hewn



space, where fishnets woven with twinkling Christmas lights decorate the ceiling. Who needs fussy food to compete with the view of the bay meandering through marsh grass, and Powder Point Bridge visible in the background?

Like many labors of love, manag-

ing Duxbury Beach Park tends to be a long-term commitment, and the Battistas aren't the first people to hold the job. T. Waldo Herrick ran it for 17 years, beginning in 1931, before handing over the operations to Ralph Blakeman, a teacher at Duxbury High School. He lived and worked at the



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### Life's a Beach at Blakeman's

pavilion with his family every summer for 38 years, then passed the job along to another teacher, Gordon Leighton, in 1985. The Battistas took over the restaurant in 2001. Dana and Missy, who were high school sweethearts, grew up going to Duxbury beach—Dana graduated from Duxbury High School in 1981 and Missy finished right behind him in 1982.

“To do this, you have to love the beach,” explains Dana, who works fall-to-spring as a high school coach and history teacher at Pembroke High School.

Duxbury Beach is owned by the Duxbury Beach Reservation, Inc., a charitable group which preserves the



all along the beach—Dana found some of the old plans for the project stored in the pavilion. But nearly a century later, Duxbury Beach is still a pristine home for shore birds like plovers, sanderlings and ruddy turnstones, and it is still a place where families from all over the South Shore come to enjoy a six-mile stretch of open sand.

People seek out the Battistas to tell them stories of how their parents met at Duxbury Beach, more than 50 years ago, or they talk about having a long-ago summer job working for Mr. Blakeman, whom Dana calls “a legend.” They bring pictures and memorabilia, which Dana hangs on the restaurant walls.

Every summer, when the Battista family leaves their Kingston home behind for another 13-week stretch at Duxbury Beach, they're mindful of their role as stewards of the beach. And with each lobster dinner they serve, the summer celebration continues. **SSL**



ecological value of the property while making it available as a public recreational resource. The Town of Duxbury leases part of the beach from the reservation, and sells parking stickers to Duxbury residents as well as seasonal over-sand beach permits to out-of-towners. Everyone else pays \$15 a day to park in the public lot managed by the Battistas, on behalf of the reservation.

Dana stresses that the parking fees help maintain a fragile barrier beach that was first protected from development by a group of residents who bought it in 1919, vowing to keep it in a nearly natural state. At the time, there were proposals to build cottages

### BLAKEMAN'S AT DUXBURY BEACH

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7 days a week

Dinner: 5-8 p.m., Thursdays through Sundays.

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Saturday, July 11, 7 pm		<b>Evening Under the Stars Festival Orchestra Pops Concert</b> A concert of classical and pops favorites! Nicholas Palmer, conductor and Tian Lu, piano. Sponsored by The Palmer Family
Sunday, July 12, 10 am		<b>Little Red Riding Hood</b> This family performance of Seymour Barab's classic features Opera by the Bay performers. Sponsored by The Curtis Family
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Saturday, August 8, 7 pm		<b>Some Enchanted Evening</b> This enchanted evening features Opera by the Bay stars Jennie Mulqueen, Lorna Jane Norris, Beth MacLeod, Neil Harrelson and George Cordes performing a compilation of Rogers and Hammerstein hits. Sponsored by William Gallagher Associates

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