

Food, wine, travel, art and entertainment

Adventures in

# DINING<sup>®</sup>

A complete guide to the spectacular Central Coast ■ Summer 1996



Crazy for Corn  
Lip-Smackin' Barbecue

# Restaurants Recently Opened



Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. Restaurant and Market

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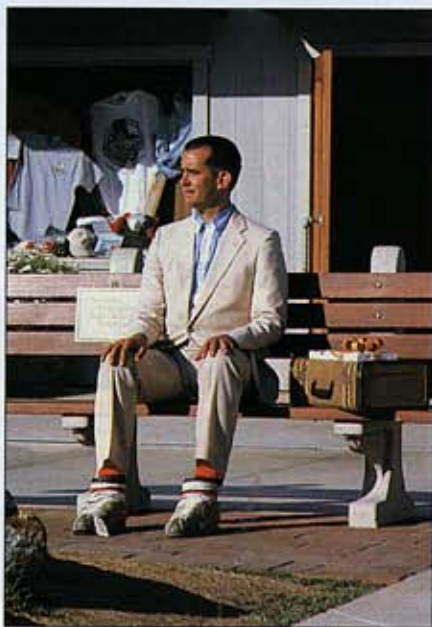
I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU, I DIDN'T expect to like Bubba Gump's. I thought it was a gimmick and nothing more. Truth is, it is a gimmick, but a thoroughly entertaining one that is certainly worth the ticket price, if not the two-hour wait some people endured in the first-blush, opening-days enthusiasm.

Bubba Gump's, a joint venture between Paramount Pictures and Rusty Pelican Restaurants inspired by the enormously successful movie "Forrest Gump," reminds me in some ways of my favorite place to eat in Disneyland, the

Blue Bayou Restaurant, part of the backdrop for the Pirates of the Caribbean ride. It is part theater, part theme park, with quite decent food thrown in for good measure. Located on the Cannery Row waterfront, a few doors down from the aquarium, this restaurant represents the first of 23 such ventures planned by Viacom Consumer Products, the licensing division for Paramount and Rusty Pelican.

"Seafood is something that we know a lot about," says Scott Barnett, Rusty Pelican president and chief executive officer. "Blending our restaurant expertise with a film that has touched so many is a sure recipe for success. The movie will get them in the door, but the food will keep them coming back."

In a courtyard outside the entrance is a bench set up for souvenir photos, with mock-ups of Forrest's running



Tom Hank's lookalike Steven Weber sitting at the bus stop bench in front of the restaurant

shoes (into which the subject's feet can be slipped), his straw suitcase and box of chocolates. Scratched into beams overhead at the entrance and all around the interior are Forrest Gump homilies such as "What does normal mean anyway?" or "Now Mama always said there's only so much fortune a man really needs. And the rest is just for showoff." Once you are inside the door a youthful staff in knit shirts, khaki shorts and baseball-type caps nearly trip over themselves in their eager-

ness to make you feel welcome.

The decor is supposed to evoke a shrimp shack in the Deep South, complete with concrete flooring, unfinished wood, exposed beams, corrugated metal siding and fishing accouterments. Memorabilia from the movie, including script pages, costumes, still photos and props such as Lt. Dan's wheelchair, are on display in cases, and the movie itself plays continuously on a number of televisions. Murals painted of scenes from the movie adorn the walls, and replicas of Forrest's shrimp boat, "Jenny," and his mama's house hang high above the tables. Food is served on sturdy blue or red plastic plates, and you can communicate with your server by flipping a license plate that reads "Run, Forrest, Run" or "Stop, Forrest, Stop."

Not surprisingly, the food reflects the movie's setting, Alabama, and its theme: "We wanted to do food that would appeal to everyone, yet maintain the integrity of a Southern shrimp shack," says Barnett.

Shrimp—in deference to Forrest's business venture with his Army pal, Bubba—is the star item on the menu appearing in a variety of guises, along with a some non-seafood offerings for those who do not care for crustaceans. I recommend starting with one of their flavorful Margaritas, which are served in a plastic pitcher (available for purchase).

Appetizers include the Shrimper's Net Catch ( $\frac{3}{4}$  pound for \$9.95), peel-and-eat shrimp steamed in beer along with either garlic spice or Cajun dipping sauce. The Run Across America Sampler (\$10.95) lets you try Bubba's shrimp dip and chips, the peel-and-eat shrimp, popcorn sea clams and California calamari. Entrees include Mama Blue's Southern Charmed Fried Shrimp served with coleslaw and French fries (\$12.95); Alabama Shrimp Spaghetti, tequila-soaked shrimp, scallops and crab with citrus cream sauce over linguini (\$12.95); and Lt. Dan's Drunken Prawns, jumbo prawns in bourbon sauce served with spicy grilled sausage and a garlic potato cake. There's also a vegetarian pasta dish (\$8.95) and grilled chicken salad (\$8.95).

For dessert you can have Forrest's Own Collection Box of Chocolates for 75 cents each, key lime pie (\$3.50), sweet potato pie (\$3.95) or an old-fashioned gooey piece of chocolate cake (\$3.95).

If you need something tangible to remind you of your experience, a gift shop just outside the entrance sells mementos ranging from T-shirts to leather jackets.

There still can be a wait to get in during peak dinner hours, but if you come early enough you can walk right in.

*Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., 720 Cannery Row, Monterey, 373-1884.*

— Sandra Leader