



First lit in 1884, the Sanibel Island Light is 98 feet tall, and its stairway has 127 steps.

LOCAL FLAVORS

SANIBEL ISLAND, FLORIDA

by TERRI PETERSON SMITH

► **The islands** off Florida’s gulf coast near Fort Myers offer RVers a chance to explore the state’s quieter and funkier side. Shining aqua waters surround Sanibel Island and its pristine white beaches. You can cruise the island on bike trails to sample terrific restaurants, a lively Sunday farmers market, and Instagram-worthy sunrises at its lighthouse or sunsets at Bowman’s Beach. In addition, Sanibel citizens have saved about 67% of the island as conservation land. So, for example, nature lovers may visit J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge or kayak parts of the 190-mile Great Calusa Blueway. For a truly wild experience, travel to nearby Cayo Costa State Park, accessible only by ferry (or by paddling your way there)

For those seeking an “old Florida” feel and artsy adventures, tiny Matlacha (pronounced mat-la-SHAY) island offers an outsized punch of colorful art galleries where you can often chat with local artists. From there, cross the bridge to Pine Island and the historic Tarpon Lodge for lunch. Then hike at the University of Florida’s Randell Research Center with its more-than-100-acre shell mound site and to learn about the ancient culture of the indigenous Calusa people. fortmyers-sanibel.com

FINE PAIRINGS

You’re beachside and feeling relaxed. So, celebrate the sunset by pairing your super-fresh fish sandwich with a crisp and refreshing white wine to complement the grouper’s delicate flavor. For a Budget-Minded Bottle, we suggest **New Zealand Mato Bay Reserve Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2020**, which offers some acidity for zest and slightly fruity overtones (\$13). For Date Night we look for **Amici Sauvignon Blanc 2020** from Napa Valley with notes of citrus and tropical fruit (\$25).



On the Menu Sautéed Grouper Sandwich

Grouper is a prominent fish in the waters, restaurants, and fish markets in this part of the Sunshine State. This grouper sandwich is crunchy, easy to make, and tastes like Florida on a bun.



YOU’LL NEED

- 4 (4–6-oz) boneless skinless grouper fillets (cod, sea bass, or other mild white-fleshed fish can be substituted)
- ½ head of romaine lettuce, roughly chopped
- 1 shallot or small onion, sliced very thin
- 2 tbsp lemon herb vinaigrette
- 1 cup flour
- 3 tbsp seafood or blackening seasoning
- Tartar sauce
- 4 sandwich buns (we like brioche buns)
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- Salt

MAKE IT

- 1) In a mixing bowl, toss together lettuce, sliced shallot, and vinaigrette to coat. Reserve until needed.
- 2) On a large plate, combine flour, seafood or blackening seasoning, and a pinch of salt.
- 3) Dredge fish fillets in the seasoned flour. Shake off excess.
- 4) Preheat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add vegetable oil and fish fillets. Cook the fish until golden brown on each side, approximately 3 minutes per side. Remove fillets from the pan and toast the buns in the residual oil approximately 1 minute.
- 5) Spread tartar sauce on the top and bottom of each bun. Add the fish fillet and top with the salad mix. ■

PHOTOS: COURTESY BEACHES OF FORT MYERS & SANIBEL; TERRI PETERSON SMITH