

Have You Heard . . . ?

Recycling grant received. Pine Knoll Shores has received a grant from the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources to purchase recycle bins for public beach accesses, large stickers for bins showing what to recycle and portable recycle bins to use for town events. This will hopefully make recycling easier and more convenient for residents and guests. A big thank you goes to Assistant Town Clerk Sarah Williams for her excellent job writing this grant proposal.

Roll-out recycle carts. The advantages of using roll-out recycle carts have been discussed in Pine Knoll Shores for several years. Nationwide statistics show that using roll-out carts increases recycling rates by 50-90%, which is a saving for municipalities. In addition, roll-out carts are typically safer for residents and collection staff to use, minimize spillage/windblown materials and increase storage capacity for the more-serious recyclers. Our neighbors in Emerald Isle have recently made the move to roll-out carts. While there are no official results yet, Emerald Isle residents sampled have given positive reviews of the new carts. If you're interested in replacing your current 18-gallon recycling bin with a much-larger container, let your local commissioner know your thoughts.

C-P-C Regional Library receives grant. The State Library of North Carolina has announced the 2014-2015 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant awardees. The awards go to local library projects that advance literacy and life-long learning, expand access to library resources and expertise, promote partnerships and collaboration and digitize materials important to the cultural heritage of North Carolina. The Craven-Pamlico-Carteret Regional Library is the recipient of a \$38,540 grant in the "EZ Planning" category. In applying for these funds, the library stated a commitment to achieve the most effective and efficient use of local resources for the benefit of residents. The C-P-C Library recognizes that this collaboration provides opportunities for service and resource allocations beyond the capacities of the individual governments and libraries, and commits the libraries to the education, economic development and quality-of-life contributions that libraries are uniquely able to provide. This year's awards, made possible by a grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services and administered by the State Library of North Carolina, will be distributed on behalf of North Carolina's libraries through programs and services available under the North Carolina LSTA Five Year Plan.



It is amazing how broad the American palate has become. Fifty years ago when we ate out, we typically went to restaurants serving plain but generally wholesome food similar to what we ate at home. Yes, meat, potato and vegetable dishes unadorned with fancy sauces (though gravy was ubiquitous) and prepared in standard ways by cooks

who learned from their mothers, who in turn learned from their mothers. We now think of these dishes as "comfort foods" that remind us fondly of days of old. Back then, too, if we were lucky enough to have recent immigrant roots, on some occasions old world dishes appeared at the dinner table, sometimes to our delight and at other times to our chagrin. And when we ate out, if we ventured at all from traditional American cooking, we went to either Chinese or Italian restaurants.

Today, Chinese, Italian and, more recently, Mexican restaurants have moved to the familiar, if not yet the comfort foods, category. Newer to us are other exciting cuisines drawn especially from Asia, including Indian, Thai and Japanese cuisines. Among the Japanese restaurants here on the Crystal Coast is Akai Hana in downtown Morehead City.

Akai Hana offers traditional Japanese cuisine. Those familiar with Japanese cooking will not be surprised by the menu items, and those not so familiar with them will have a culinary adventure in store. Both the lunch and dinner menus include appetizers, noodle soups, stir-fry dishes and full entrees.

The appetizers available at lunch present a delightful choice of meat, seafood and vegetarian items. Noteworthy among them are dumplings (pork, shrimp and vegetable), tempura dishes (chicken, mushroom, shrimp and vegetable) and seafood sushi (crab, salmon, shrimp and tuna). Beyond these, especially interesting are several additional seafood appetizers, such as fried soft-shell crab, broiled green mussels and a number of squid and octopus creations. Flour and buckwheat noodle soups, all based in fish broth, feature ingredients like mushrooms, shrimp and spinach in interesting combinations. Lunchtime sushi combos include nagiri (sliced raw seafood placed atop molded rice), California roll (crab, avocado and cucumber wrapped in seaweed and nestled in an external layer of rice) and sashimi (sliced raw fish). Sushi is usually accompanied by pickled ginger, soy sauce and wasabi horseradish. These menu items typically cost between \$4 and \$15, with most under \$10.

Luncheon entrees at Akai Hana largely center on tempura and teriyaki dishes, with chicken, shrimp, steak and vegetables as their focus. On the menu, too, are deep-fried chicken and pork cutlets served with special sauces. Stir-fried egg noodles and vegetables, matched with chicken, shrimp or steak, are also available. Finally, traditional Japanese Bento Box lunches offer combinations that include shrimp and vegetable tempura with chicken, salmon or steak teriyaki. These substantial lunch choices are generally priced between \$7 and \$15.

The dinner menu at Akai Hana is an expansion of the lunch menu. The appetizers offered are the same as at lunchtime. Additions to sushi combos are a sushi/sashimi combination plate and broiled eel over a bed of rice in an exotic eel sauce. An addition to the noodle soups is a beef sukiyaki creation, bringing together thinly sliced beef, translucent noodles, mushrooms, scallions, spinach and tofu in a light sauce. The extended list of dinner entrees includes salmon teriyaki (sashimi-grade grilled salmon served with steamed vegetables and teriyaki sauce) and vegetable teriyaki (steamed mushrooms, tofu and assorted vegetables in a teriyaki sauce). Dinner combo platters are teriyaki/tempura preparations, combining chicken, salmon or steak teriyaki with shrimp and vegetable tempura, and also a California sushi roll. Dinner entrees and combination platters cost between \$15 and \$26, with many less than \$20.

Akai Hana is both a full restaurant and a sushi bar. Its extensive menu of freshly prepared sushi is about 50 items long. They range from nagiri-style delicacies that include clams, eel, mussels, octopus, salmon, shrimp, smelt, squid, tuna and whitefish; to roll-style creations similarly including seafood and also vegetables; to house specialty preparations with intriguing names like "dragon," "hurricane" and "geisha" rolls. Sushi items are priced from about \$3 to \$15 for multiple-piece selections, most costing less than \$10.

To accompany lunch or dinner, the restaurant offers soft drinks, wine (sake, too) and beer, including some Japanese beers—all at reasonable prices.

Interesting desserts are also available. They include ginger or green tea ice cream, mochi ice cream (sweet rice pastry wrapped around the patron's choice among green tea, Kona coffee, mango, red bean or strawberry ice cream) and tempura ice cream (vanilla ice cream enveloped in pound cake, then deep fried and covered with chocolate sauce and whipped cream). Desserts, too, are modestly priced between \$2 and \$5.50.

Akai Hana is located at 909A Arendell Street in downtown Morehead City. The restaurant is open for lunch Monday through Friday from 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., and for dinner Monday through Saturday from 5 p.m.-9:30 p.m. The telephone number is 222-3272 and the website is akaihana.com.