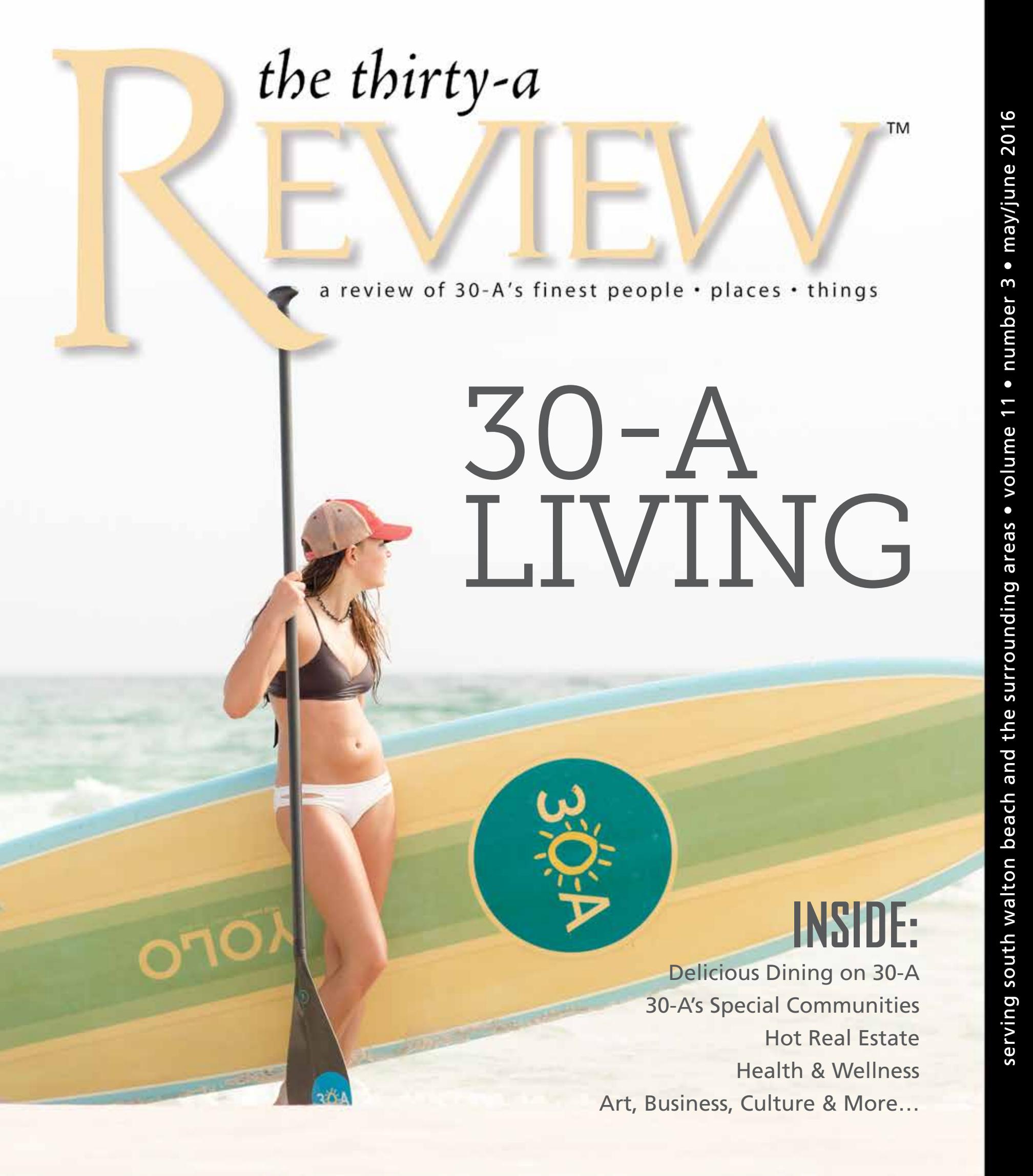


# the thirty-a REVIEW™

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## 30-A LIVING



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# Giovanni (Gio) Filippone of Vue on 30a

BY SUSAN BENTON

Executive Chef Giovanni (Gio) Filippone



Often, when selecting a restaurant with a view, getting a table to see it might be difficult. But at Vue on 30a everyone has the sought after backdrop of the Gulf to feast by, while experiencing the innovative menu offerings. But it's not just about the view. If you are seeking a sophisticated yet laid back atmosphere to dine, nibble on tapas while sipping a glass of wine, or thirsting for a craft cocktail at the bar after a busy day, then the Vue on 30a is also where you need to be.

Vue on 30a is the only restaurant on Florida's Scenic Highway 30A that has been voted as having the *Best Waterfront Dining* by Florida Travel + Life Magazine, and the *Best Place to Watch a Sunset* by the readers of Destin Magazine. Executive Chef Giovanni (Gio) Filippone is at the kitchen's helm conjuring up new flavors to savor.

Born in 1970 in Givet, France, Filippone immigrated with his family to Bayonne, New Jersey when he was just 10 years of age. The strongest memories of his youth were always around the family table and cooking together. "We never ate fast food and rarely ate out. My mother was my biggest inspiration, and since her passing, I can feel her presence and passion in my creations today," says Filippone.

Chef Gio Filippone attended the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York and completed their

chef program in 1997. He worked in different restaurants, steakhouses, and hotels in New England and says, "When working in the hotels, I was surrounded by such talent each day, which pushed me to work hard and do my absolute best. The hotel industry helped me gain a great deal of experience, but also confirmed that cooking was always what I wanted to do."

An offer came to him to work in Destin, Florida, and Filippone says, "The atmosphere reminded me of being at home as a young kid, and cooking with my family. I was excited to focus on specialty dishes and get creative with all of the fresh seafood, meat, and produce available in the region at my fingertips!"

While working as an Executive Chef in Destin, Filippone auditioned for Fox Broadcasting's culinary reality show, *Hell's Kitchen*, hosted by famed chef Gordon Ramsay. He was asked to be a part of the Season 5 cast, which aired in January 2009. Filippone made it into the top six and says, "The audition was a quick decision, and though I hesitated, I realized it was actually the chance of a lifetime, a way to really challenge myself and the skills I have mastered."

Now, as the Executive Chef of Vue on 30a, Filippone has incorporated all of his experiences into a refreshed bill of fare that blends his twist of American northern, southern, and Italian cuisine with the greatest ingredients available in the area. Dishes like Pistachio Grouper, or the Whole Fish that is tempura battered and served with sweet Thai chili sauce and soy has been a big hit with

patrons. However, Filippone has created a new menu for the spring and says, "Each dish tells a story using what the eyes see and what the palate tastes." Look for the Grilled Lamb Porterhouse with sundried tomatoes in a chimichurri sauce, the Andouille Fried Oysters, and the Sautéed Lobster Tail in lemongrass curry coconut sauce to be making waves this season.

In 2013 Chef Gio was awarded "Best Chefs America", and Vue on 30a continues to be a "Most Booked" restaurant at OpenTable.com. With Chef Filippone at the forefront, it is easy to see why. On his days off you will more than likely find him enjoying time with his family and cooking up a meal of linguini and clam sauce, his personal favorite.

**Located at 4801 West County Highway 30A, Vue on 30a is the ideal environment to cater small gatherings or large wedding events. Hours of operation are lunch, Monday - Saturday from 11am-2:30pm; dinner daily from 5pm-9pm, Happy Hour daily from 3-6pm, and Sunday brunch 10am-2pm. For more information or to make a reservation, call (850) 267-2305.**

**Susan Benton is a food and travel writer and the owner of 30AEATS.com, where she shares her passion for cooking and her commitment to promoting farmers, fishermen, chefs, artisans, and restaurants along the Florida Panhandle. Look for her cookbook to be released this year.**