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N.O. Restaurateur and Chef, Joel Dondis, Launches New Venture with Harrah's

June, 11 2007-New Orleans, LA – The Louisiana Restaurant Association's 2006 Restaurateur of the Year, Joel Dondis, unveils his latest restaurant - Grand Isle - in early June along Harrah's Fulton Street development in downtown New Orleans. Inspired by the fishing village of the same name, Grand Isle is a casual eatery featuring fresh seafood, Dondis' favorite South Louisiana recipes and indisputably the coldest beer in town.

“Grand Isle is a throwback to the day of great, fresh seafood that's classically and lovingly prepared,” says Dondis. “Our customers will experience authentic Louisiana and home-style cooking served with Southern hospitality found only in New Orleans.”

Grand Isle captures the deep flavor and culinary traditions of South Louisiana, harkening back to a 1920s and 30s way of life. The restaurant's walls are adorned with giant black and white photography by acclaimed photographer Fonville Winans, who in the 1930s studied the daily lives of Louisiana's oyster farmers, shrimpers and fishermen. Additionally, New Orleans architect Lee Ledbetter mixes weathered Cypress, marble and mosaic tile throughout Grand Isle's interior for a rustic feel.

The restaurant's menu boasts Louisiana staples from Oysters Rockefeller and turtle soup to fresh, indigenous seafood to an array of down-home favorites, including pork chop, pot roast and roasted chicken. Dondis and executive chef Jens Jordan designed the menu and recipes incorporating a Grand Isle twist.

“Our turtle soup is served with chunks of turtle meat, which is not how the dish is traditionally prepared in local restaurants. We also included a duck debris po-boy

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because it's not only delicious, you can't get one anywhere else," says Jordan about Grand Isle's unique menu.

Other notable menu items include: Crawfish Cardinal, Grand Isle Lobster, BBQ Quail with Stone Ground Grits and White Chocolate Pecan Pie. Raw oysters on the half shell and shrimp by the pound can be enjoyed at the oyster bar and cold beer is served in taps encased in columns of ice for the absolutely coldest beer in New Orleans.

Grand Isle is located at 575 Convention Center Blvd and has outdoor seating along Fulton Street, a corridor recently redeveloped by Harrah's New Orleans Hotel and Casino. The Fulton Street development has attracted local and national entities, including Aidan Gill's for Men and Gordon Biersch Brewery.

"Joel is making a significant commitment to New Orleans with the opening of Grand Isle," said Jim Hoskins, senior vice-president and general manager of Harrah's New Orleans Casino and Hotel. "The restaurant will be an attractive addition to Fulton Street and move us closer to our goal of sustaining a new and exciting entertainment, dining and shopping destination for both locals and visitors."

Dondis and partners have ambitious plans for Grand Isle and expect to open additional locations in the future.

"Fonville's photography helped me define the Grand Isle vision and concept," says Dondis, "and we feel this concept would be enjoyed across the region and the U.S."

Dondis has two partners in Grand Isle: David Pearson and Jeff Hof, the restaurant's general manager.

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