The lobster fleet shimmers at its moorings as Fidelity V, propelled by three black 300-hp Mercury outboards, takes a conspicuous turn at the bell buoy and heads with boyhood familiarity into Cape Porpoise Harbor. Weaving deftly through the channel buoys, it’s obvious the very inconspicuous Neil Bush, who’s borrowed his dad’s (President George Bush 41) boat with two young Texas-t-shirt-clad passengers along for the ride, knows his way around here. Gliding past Town Pier ahead of the sun, Bush (a rare sighting—did you know there was also a Marvin Bush?) ties up momentarily beyond The Ramp restaurant to score some classic Maine crustacean takeout.

The luscious bar and waterfront dining room create romantic shore dining at Pier 77. At their attached sister restaurant, The Ramp (inset), the atmosphere is pure waterfront fun, with yachting pennants and signature drinks like Painkiller (Malibu rum, orange & pineapple juice, nutmeg).

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Greetings from Cocktail Cove

Yes, it’s possible to tie up and dine at a shorefront restaurant if you know the ropes.

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS
Brown's Wharf is a resort hotel, restaurant, and marina that offers visitors luxury waterfront accommodations. We are a family owned and operated business that has been hosting travelers in Boothbay Harbor since 1944. With water views from every room, Brown's Wharf Inn offers spectacular sunsets and beautiful flowers. Our “over-the-water” restaurant offers only the best in dining for the past 67 years.

Still, if the restaurants are on pilings hugging Kennebunkport Pier, it doesn’t hurt to ask around, does it?

When we did exactly that, one diner confided to us he’s slid in and carefully tied up his 16-foot motorboat among the little rowboats along the floats of the pier for 40 years, with no one ever asking him why. What happens in Cape Porpoise stays in Cape Porpoise.

Still, it’s best to check in with the harbormaster, who can be reached at 967-5040.

Any way you look at it, it’s worth the effort, because many of Maine’s finest shore restaurants are even more delicious for “two if by sea.”

Here are some reef points to help you learn the ropes, too.

Dennett’s Wharf Oyster Bar
You’re entering Castine Harbor in a bobbing sailboat at twilight. What’s up ahead? The canary-yellow awning of Dennett’s Wharf Oyster Bar is visible from half mile away.

Making fast to the restaurant dock, you walk up the ramp to the wooden gate with a sign: “For those arriving by boat, please see the hostess…”

Don’t let the casual vibe fool you—this dockside shack is a coy culinary wolf in sheep’s clothing and rivals the most urban of bistro.

The onion rings are crispy and sweet, the peekytoe crab salad rich and buttery, and the house-made corned beef smothered with crunchy sauerkraut and nutty Gruyère. But The Reuben’s even more of a lucky strike (the

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Watercolor by Richard Anzelc

old salts here love to talk about the Civil-War era bowling alley once located beneath), best paired with a Bloody Valentine (Sin Cider, framboise lambic, and just as loved as a Sailor’s valentine)—a wink at “the Dennett family’s rum-running operation at this wharf during Prohibition,” says manager Zander Parker. As for your rum-runner, “We’ll take boats up to 80 feet—over 30 feet, please call ahead. There’s no fee for lunch/dinner day-trippers and cruising yachts. Additional space is available next door at the public dock.”

**DiMillo’s Floating Restaurant**

Enjoy deep-fried lobster tails and a Salty Dog (vodka, grapefruit juice, salted rim) literally on the water. And getting to this iconic Portland restaurant is easy as a sea breeze. “Call our marina on Channel 9. An attendant will help tie up your vessel,” says Steve DiMillo, Sr. “It’s $20 up front, but with a dinner receipt, you’ll get a refund. Size allowance determined by availability.”

**Reading Room, Bar Harbor Inn**

“Right across from us is Bar Island, then the Porcupine Islands and Winter Harbor. It’s the most beautiful view in town,” says dining room manager Cathy Walton. Don’t miss the lobster pie and Oasis Club Cosmopolitan (Absolut Citron, Cointreau, cranberry). “Kayaks can come up on the town beach for no fee.” But for bigger fish, harbormaster Charlie Phippen says, “$3 per foot per day.”

**Diamond’s Edge**

“Pulling into Diamond Cove, you’ll see our 40-foot marina on the pier. We have about 20 slips. Someone will help you tie up,” says Incredible views, crab-stuffed avocados, and a ‘Fountain of Youth’ (Absolut Berri Acai, soda, pomegranate syrup) await you at Kennebunkport’s Arundel Wharf Restaurant. Their dock is private, so get permission before tying off to tie one on.”
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In the early 1900’s a candy maker from Bangor persuaded the Maine Central Railroad to sell his rich caramel rolled in confectioners sugar to its passengers. The porter, with a basket on his arm, soon became a familiar sight and the penny taffy became a tradition on the Bangor, Portland, and Boston lines.

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