

Stocking Island's Professor Beach Bar
KB Bowe of Chat N' Chill
By Tim Cotroneo



As the water taxi from Great Exuma bobbed within several feet of Stocking Island's dock, 10 passengers craned their necks in search of "the sign." With the Internet making the world smaller, nearly everyone on the boat had read about the sign that serves as this 7-mile long island's trademark. Once the wide-eye passengers stepped ashore and viewed the famous Chat N' Chill 15-foot internationally constructed tower, that's when reality, and the fun, kicked in.

Since 1998, vacationers from around the world have arrived on Stocking Island for one reason. Like the trailblazers before them, on this Sunday in November, 10 people hailing from the Netherlands, Great Britain, northern California, Miami, and Minnesota arrived to experience the magic of KB Bowe's now legendary Chat N' Chill beach bar.

At 2:00 in the afternoon, there were already about 50 revelers, picnickers, swimmers, boaters, and minglers in various stages of bliss. These strangers-turned-acquaintances co-existed famously, just like the 65-year old Bowe had imagined when he purchased

nine acres and 1600-feet of pristine beachfront on Great Exuma's remote southeastern neighbor.

MBA in Beach Bar Economics



You can search the world over and not find another beach bar owner with the education, business experience, high-octane entrepreneurial mind, and personal story that compares to Bowe. Want proof? How many beach bar owners have an MBA in Economics from the University of Chicago, and succeeded in businesses ranging from banking, hotels, and raising goats.

The first thing that jumps out at Bowe's first-time guests is the far-reaching and eclectic mix of people you're sharing island time with. Bowe will tell you this harmony among continents and classes is no accident.

"People cherish their one or two weeks off per year. When they go on vacation and come to the Bahamas, they're seeking an authentic island experience. They're looking to make a memory. That's what they find here at Chat N' Chill," Bowe said.

Real Caribbean Experience



Most of Bowe's clientele arrive daily by ferry from Great Exuma, the Bahamas Out Island in which Bowe was born and raised. The balance of visitors are curious boaters that anchored because they'd heard of Chat N' Chill via word-of-mouth. In the early days of Chat N' Chill, Bowe literally grilled the boating crowd as to what they were searching for when they docked their boats and needed to recharge. Today, this early market research is paying major dividends for this personable father of five.

In swimsuits, sunglasses, and flip flops, it's hard to know whether the person you're hoisting a Bahamian-brewed Kalik beer with earns an hourly wage or sits on the Board of Directors of a Fortune 500 corporation. This refreshing lack of pretense is by design and just the way Bowe and his legion of admirers like it. "Hardly a day goes by that I don't have a CEO or even a billionaire share that they just feel normal here. They tell me to not change a thing," Bowe confided.

Not changing a thing means Bowe's beach bar maintains a rustic quality that you won't find at a Five-Star branded resort. It also means a menu of freshly grilled food that is in direct response to Bowe's quizzing his female customers. "We learned that if the guys want to spend any length of time here, our food needs to be healthy and grilled, not fried. The ladies also told us that our Chat N' Chill restrooms are the cleanest of any beach bar in the Caribbean. Feedback from our female customers has been critical to our success," Bowe said.

Multiple Revenue Streams



On one side of the Chat N' Chill is a new gift shop. Roughly 80 steps down the beach is another revenue stream in the form of a conch shack serving fresh conch salad. The conch shack is just 15 feet from the Caribbean Sea. In the shallow turquoise water one can't help but notice a handful of rather imposing-looking jet-black hovercraft floating just beneath the surface. It turns out these large, but genteel creatures, are actually the most people-friendly stingrays you'd ever hope to meet. These whip-tailed socialites like nothing better than to nuzzle vacationers' ankles. At every turn, Bowe's laid back business playground is not without surprises.

The centerpiece of Bowe's island masterpiece is "the sign." Standing like a beacon in the middle of Chat N' Chill's beach are no less than 30 wooden placards nailed on a single vertical post. The placards reveal the home towns of Chat N' Chill loyalists who've graced Stocking Island before you. The cities range from Glasgow, to Normandy, to Louisville, and all points in between. Listen for even a moment to the giddy multi-lingual conversations going on around you and you realize Chat N' Chill could be the answer to world peace.



“Ever since we opened for business, I’ve asked our customers “Why?”” Why are they here? What are they looking for? The answer can be found above our beach bar’s entrance door, Chat N’ Chill. People come here to relax and have a good time. Chat and chill is a great brand,” Bowe said.

Like he does 363 days per year, Bowe worked the crowd and listened as to how he could make this day special. A surgeon from Houston walked up to Bowe, motioned toward the beach and said, “I needed something like this. This is special.” As the surgeon walked to a picnic table where chattering friends were awaiting with a handful of cold Kalik’s, all Bowe could do is knowingly nod and smile.

<http://chatnchill.com/>

