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Criss Menassa Named Executive Chef at Sundial Beach Resort

Sanibel Island, FL – December 11, 2013 – A seasoned professional chef with more than 17 years of service to guests at Southwest Florida’s leading restaurants has returned to the area as the new Executive Chef at Sundial Beach Resort (www.sundialresort.com) on Sanibel Island, which is now open to the public for the first time in five years.

“We are delighted to have Chef Criss Menassa join our team,” commented Resort General Manager Bob Kramm. “We anticipate that her culinary expertise will elevate Sundial Beach Resort, Waterview restaurant and other dining operations as well as our expanding catering services to dining levels never before experienced on the island. Her menu selections for our Christmas Grand Buffet and New Year’s Eve celebration will please the most discriminating aficionado of fine dining. As we move forward, under guidance from Chef Criss, we will be offering the Four Seasons of Sanibel with innovative seasonally culinary creations year-round.”

Prior to her new position at Sundial Beach Resort, the new Executive Chef served at the Wild Dunes Resort in South Carolina, the Heritage Palms Golf and Country Club in Fort Myers and at Pink Shell Beach Resort on Fort Myers Beach. The majority of her culinary experience in Fort Myers was acquired at Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa. She has cooked for many celebrities including actress Goldie Hawn and Sopranos star James Gandolfini. Her greatest joy comes from pleasing people through her extraordinary culinary skills.

“In many ways, I feel like I am returning home to Southwest Florida and am thrilled to be able to help return Sundial’s restaurants to the respected role they once retained. With our bountiful waters brimming with succulent seafood, we plan to be recognized and respected for our celebration of Gulf seafood and the preparation of fresh caught local fish, including varieties that the public may not be aware of.”

Raised in New England, Criss Menassa's culinary interests were fueled and inspired by her large Mediterranean family (with 30 cousins) resulting in strong New England and Mediterranean influences. Her mother's family was from Greece and her father's family from Alexandria, Egypt. Having risen through the culinary ranks through influence and training by some of the finest chefs in several states, she has earned praise from her fellow peers as well as culinary audiences coast to coast.

Added Sundial's Food and Beverage Manager Paul Cuppy, "Chef Menassa's gifted imagination, total flexibility and passion for her work and the people she serves will make her the driving force throughout our culinary departments. On any given day she may be cooking for a wedding, corporate retreat, gala event or teaching cooking classes to our resident owners. Her talent for diversity in cuisine will enable her to create delicious dishes that are simple in approach and strong in flavor."

Sundial Beach Resort was recently named the Best Full Service Resort on Sanibel and Captiva Islands in the annual *Best of the Islands* competition based on votes from readers of The Islander newspaper.