

## In Atlantic City, Margaritaville brings talk of new life for struggling casino town

Written by Administrator  
Friday, 24 May 2013 00:53 -

---

christie-resorts.JPG

Gov. Chris Christie attends the opening of Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville restaurant at Resorts Casino in Atlantic City today.  
*(Nyier Abdou/The Star-Ledger)*



[ATLANTIC CITY](#) — New Jersey's oldest casino opened its newest attraction today — the \$35 million Margaritaville, which is hoped to be a vital piece of the effort to breathe new life into Atlantic City.

Gov. Chris Christie joined business executives at the new complex of restaurants, bars and casino floor, all of which are branded by entertainer Jimmy Buffett. The hope for Resorts Casino Hotel, which opened 35 years ago this weekend, is that Margaritaville and other parts of its larger \$70 million renovation will turn a tired business into a party destination.

"Atlantic City, to me, should be and will be the premier resort on the East Coast, maybe in the country. It's almost here now. We had a tough time, but we are working together to enter a new era," said Morris Bailey, the casino's owner. "When we bought this asset, we recognized that Atlantic City and Resorts and all the other businesses and casinos are interlinked. For our casino to be profitable, for the city to recover, we must reinvent it."

## In Atlantic City, Margaritaville brings talk of new life for struggling casino town

Written by Administrator  
Friday, 24 May 2013 00:53 -

---

The roughly 100 people who had packed into the restaurant, including a who's who of Atlantic City, cheered the prospect. The city's casinos, and thus the rest of the town, have been in a years-long revenue slide. It's been driven by competition in neighboring states and was made worse by the recession.

Figures released Wednesday by the state Division of Gaming Enforcement showed gross operating profits at Atlantic City's casinos plunged 63 in the first quarter of this year. Resorts lost more than \$6 million for the quarter, which was 78 percent worse than a year ago.

There's hope that online gambling, which may be a reality in New Jersey as early as this fall, will lift the casinos' fortunes. But for the town to really prosper, it still must attract people in big numbers.

Many "convenience gamblers" – folks who just want to play the slots or poker on a weekend, then rush back to work – have disappeared.

Now gambling executives and government officials are trying to re-brand the town as a destination for families and partiers alike, and not just as a place to play the odds.

Matthew Levinson, the chairman of the state's Casino Control Commission, which regulates casino licenses, said the opening of Margaritaville is the "the most significant thing that I can remember happening in Atlantic City in the non-gaming arena."

"The key to bringing this town back is to have amenities like this, is to have people come to town, to have the offering of gaming and also being able to do some other things," Levinson said in an interview on the city's famed boardwalk. "If you look at Margaritaville, it's going to be a draw for somebody that's never come to Atlantic City before. And that's what you need."

## In Atlantic City, Margaritaville brings talk of new life for struggling casino town

Written by Administrator  
Friday, 24 May 2013 00:53 -

---

Jimmy Buffett was out of the country and did not attend the opening, but it was assured he'd come to visit.

div class="inline-sidebar" style="border: 1px solid rgb(205, 200, 177); padding: 10px; line-height: 16px; width: 220px; font-family: Verdana,Arial,sans-serif; margin-bottom: 10px; float: right; margin-left: 10px; font-size: 13px;">

### RELATED COVERAGE:

- [\\$35M Margaritaville to hold grand opening in Atlantic City today](#)
- [Some waste away trying out for Atlantic City's Buffett-themed restaurant Margaritaville](#)
- [Jimmy Buffett's 'Margaritaville' complex drops anchor at Atlantic City's Resorts casino](#)
- [Margaritaville opening planned for Memorial Day Weekend at Resorts](#)

"You couldn't keep him away from this beach," Margaritaville chief executive John Cohan said.

At the announcement in July, Buffet told the crowd gathered on the Boardwalk, "It certainly does not go without being noticed by me and a lot of people who work for me that the Jersey Shore has the largest flock of parrotheads. So in helping bring back a great beach town, we're also giving a flock of migrant birds a nest to come to."

The 14,000-square-foot complex, built in record time, is the 25th the entertainer has opened and the only one to offer every amenity the business offers. It includes a Margaritaville restaurant, LandShark Bar & Grill, Margaritaville-themed casino complete with a giant blender, Five O'clock Somewhere bar, retail store and a coffee shop.

## In Atlantic City, Margaritaville brings talk of new life for struggling casino town

Written by Administrator  
Friday, 24 May 2013 00:53 -

---

The concept is built on the laid-back, living-at-the-beach lifestyle synonymous with Buffett and his music. The company describes the complex, with a bit hyperbole, as transporting “guests to the island destination of their memories or dreams.”

Perhaps a stretch, but the governor thinks it could be a big part of transporting Atlantic City’s back to its grandeur of yesteryear. As he’s been doing up and down the Shore this week, Christie talked about Hurricane Sandy, which flooded almost every street in Atlantic City and battered the facades of several casinos, but left the town in far better shape than places to the north.

Still, Christie said, the storm – as unfortunate as it was – presented an “opportunity” to Atlantic City and other towns it struck to start anew, to throw out what didn’t work and restore what did.

“I can tell you that what I feel in Atlantic City now is a renewed enthusiasm,” he said, going on to offer a message to city’s residents and leaders: “We’re hoping to hit the reset button with you.”

**Read more** [http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&usg=AFQjCNH6oOrKjPbUQ7VcXKqtvQ4ukUavPA&url=http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2013/05/atlantic\\_city\\_resorts\\_margarit.html](http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&usg=AFQjCNH6oOrKjPbUQ7VcXKqtvQ4ukUavPA&url=http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2013/05/atlantic_city_resorts_margarit.html)