



BLUE BLAZER

THE GRAND BANKS 45 EASTBAY SX COMBINES TIMELESS DESIGN WITH FRESH STYLING.
BY GEORGE SASS JR. PHOTOS BY JONATHAN COOPER



The evolution of down east inspired designs during the past several decades has been an interesting process to observe. This genre of design was inspired by the salty, no-nonsense Maine-built lobster boats. Occasionally a yachtsman commissioned a yard to finish a hull with a "yacht" interior, although they were still rather basic when it came to styling and amenities. Eventually boats from Maine builders such as Wilbur, Jarvis-Newman, Spencer, and Wesmac began to carve their own slice

of the pie, gracing waterways around North America.

There were certainly a few flashier, plusher designs produced by custom and semi-custom yards such as Alden Yachts and Ted Hood's Little Harbor. The production market, however, was relatively void of down east styled production models until the mid 1990s. Grand Banks Yachts was one of the pioneers in this niche market with the introduction of its Eastbay series in 1995. It developed the winning formula of combining a Ray

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Hunt-hull with the legendary build quality of a Grand Banks. The first Grand Banks Eastbay was a 38 express with exquisite lines that would stir the emotions of even a novice boater. No matter which way your design sense leaned, few could argue that the design was timeless, like the blue blazer many of us have hanging in our closet. (To fulfill my editorial obligations I should mention that I worked for Grand Banks until 2000.) The new Grand Banks Eastbay 45 is the latest in the series and relies on the same winning combination, but spices up the formula dramatically.

The company first developed the 38 to address the aging trawler customer who was looking to downsize and whose agility dictated the convenience of an express styled boat. This target audience was certainly receptive to the 38 concept, however an entirely new, broader market was attracted to the styling, performance, and quality of the Eastbay. Eventually the company introduced several models up to 58 feet and today production matches that of its venerable trawler series.

Soon this niche market was flooded with a host of builders riding the retro wave. However, these early designs, the Eastbay included, did have some short-

This optional layout (left) has the galley aft, closer to the cockpit.



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comings. My friend and marine industry veteran, the late Chip Shea, had a good perspective on the down east fury. "You know, I see some guy pull into the marina next to me on a million dollar down east boat, and he's still walking down the dock with his toiletry kit to take a shower because he's got a small crummy wet head. I spent half that and I'm surrounded by the comforts of home." I never forgot Chip's sentiment and became keenly aware of it while cruising on and testing a variety of designs.

Most of these early designs were nice to look at, but when it came to creature comforts and updated interior styling, they fell short. In a sense, the evolutionary ladder did not propel the design much beyond their traditional, conservative, Yankee roots. Is it possible to still maintain the classic elements of down east design, yet spruce it up for a more discerning buyer? The new Eastbay 45 is proof positive that it is.

The exterior styling cues are subtle, but as a whole, give the Eastbay a wink toward contemporary influence. A strong effort was made to soften things up a little. For instance, ports are now rounded versus the original rectangular ones of the earlier models. The stanchions slope forward, and the edges of the deck house windows are softened and curve around the rear of the house.

Yet the 45 still features the same details that make the series so popular with cruisers. The side decks are wide and require no twisting or turning to get to the bow. There are large cleats and chocks, including properly positioned amidships cleats that are large enough to allow you to double up a fore and aft spring. The yard also placed grab rails where you need them to insure a safe passage between the bow and the cockpit. I like the fact that the forward coach roof is finished with a painted non-skid. Without it, the area would be a skating rink when wet. The one exterior change I would suggest is altering the mast to allow for an open array radar.

At press time the company was modifying the 45 to allow for a larger cockpit, foregoing the fixed fiberglass swim platform that was designed to easily accommodate a tender. Personally, I thought the size of the cockpit was more than adequate and I liked having a smart tender retrieval system. The lines of the 45 are too sweet to hang an unsightly inflatable off the transom. Although I commend the company in making the change after digesting customer feedback.

One of the unique features that forces the cliché—"this is not your father's Eastbay"—is the drop-down window and Dutch-door between the cockpit and saloon. The design joins the two social centers: the saloon/galley and the cockpit. This gives a large indoor/outdoor great room of sorts. I was able to put the concept to the test during a post-photoshoot happy hour in the Bahamas. The design's functionality was increased by the placement of the galley in the aft port corner. This arrangement *continued on page 68*

The sunroof opens up the saloon with air and light.



