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## Marco Boat Parade – Dec 21, 2009



MARCO ISLAND — Santa probably felt right at home. By Marco Island standards, Saturday evening was practically polar, with a chill wind whipping up wavelets around the boats as the Christmas Island Style Boat Parade passed in review.

A total of 13 official entries made the trip winding through the bays and canals, garnering applause from the revelers on shore.

“Everyone was calling to make sure when the parade was coming by, so they could schedule their Christmas parties,” said Christmas Island Style chairman Steve “Stef” Stefanides.

All along the parade route, from Factory Bay, up the river to the Marco Island Yacht Club, past the Esplanade, Hideaway Beach and over to the Isles of Capri, holiday spirits were flowing in abundance.

Boats ranged from 16-footers up to the 85 ft. Marco Princess. The skippers went all out to put on a festive holiday show.

Franklin Rinker turned his 47-foot sloop, the Barefoot Contessa, into a giant Christmas tree, with the towering mast festooned with hundreds of green lights and candy canes.

Justin Henna’s boat, aptly named Kris Kringles, was topped with an enormous illuminated pink flamingo, with a flesh and blood Santa Claus at the reins and waving to the crowds.

**The 48-foot Marco Mania, captained by David Besuden, was lit up with enough strings of lights to be visible from space, with a flock of flamingos strolling under a grove of palm trees on the foredeck.**

Elizabeth Bangston, down from Decatur, Ill., visiting her in-laws, along with her husband and daughter Gabrielle, didn’t know ahead of time she was dining along the route of a parade. Gabrielle, 15 months old, watched the boats wide-eyed but didn’t choose to comment.

Chuck and Ginny Walton came over from Isles of Capri and tied up their boat, "Rebound," at the Snook Inn to watch the parade go by, accompanied by a boatload of friends. The two are co-chairs of the Isles of Capri boat parade held the week before Marco's.

"She does all the work, I take all the credit," said Chuck. "We came over here to watch and see how you do it on Marco."

The official judges held court on the upper deck at the Snook Inn, at a party the Snook hosted for Christmas Island Style. After the parade passed, the judges huddled together in a room behind the balcony to judge the entries and select the winners.

Dick Shanahan kept the deliberations moving at a brisk pace, mirroring, he said, the boats as they went by. "This was the quickest parade in history," said Shanahan. "We didn't have a lot of quantity, but we sure had a lot of quality."

The award for Most Entertaining went to Dave Dehanas in April's Sunset. Most Creative was Richard Shanahan's GEM Remotes, and Best Holiday Spirit was won by Justin Henna and his flamingo.

**Marco Mania was the night's big winner, taking the Best Overall award.** Parade viewers at the Esplanade also voted for a People's Choice award.