

Life in the Valley

The restaurants we said goodbye to in 2019

Owning a restaurant is not for the weak, and the fickle industry with its demanding hours and slim margins claims as many businesses as those that flourish. Salem's dining scene lost some greats this year. What follows is a list of the dearly departed.

The Long-Timers

It's always sad when a beloved restaurant closes, but it's even sadder when the restaurant is so long-established that losing it feels personal.

Silver Grille

Open since 1996, Jeff and Naomi Nizlek announced the impending closure of their Silverton restaurant, Silver Grille, in August. The couple recently welcomed their first grandchild, a perspective-shifting occasion that left them wondering how to free up time in the midst of running the small restaurant. "We just knew it's the right time to transition," Nizlek said at the time. "As soon as we made the decision, things in our personal lives have been falling into place."

Allan's Coffee & Tea (aka The Beanery)

Allan Stuart founded his coffee roastery, then called Allann Bros. Coffee, in Ashland in 1972. Just a few years later in 1975 he opened his first Salem cafe location at 545 Court Street. Over the course of the next 46 years, the company operated several "The Beanery" cafe locations in Salem. Like the others before it, the company's final coffee shop in Salem closed in April, but still operates retail locations in Corvallis and Eugene.

Ramen Ichiban

In 1994, when Haruo "Harry" and Kazuo "Kay" Ogawa opened Ramen Ichiban in south Salem, they charged \$3 for an order of gyoza and \$4.50 for a bento box of pork and noodles. Haruo recalls how people would come in the door of the restaurant and just ask for a bento. They didn't understand that bento just means food to-go and not a specific dish. After decades of teaching Salem about Japanese food, the couple sold the restaurant in August and retired. The space is now home to the Manna Japanese Comfort Food.

Mirador Mexican Restaurant

Six months after opening on Commercial Street SE, Mirador Mexican Restaurant closed. Owner Don Miguel Brambila and his family have operated several Mexican restaurants in Salem at various locations spanning the past three decades. Most recently, they owned Don Miguel Mexican Restaurant on Fairgrounds Road NE. They closed that location in January 2018.

Rock-N-Rogers

Darlene and Roger Hawley opened the first Rock-N-Rogers at 1405 Broadway Street NE in 1988 in a former sandwich shop on the corner of Hood Street NE. Owners since 2012, Glen and Loydee Stonebrink closed the three remaining Salem locations of Rock-N-Rogers throughout the course of this year. Rock-n-Rogers at Farrol's Restaurant in Rickreall remains in operation to date.

Salvador's Bakery 2

Socorro Larios opened bakery and tateria Salvador's Bakery 2 on Silverton Road in 1994. Throughout the years several of her eight children have worked alongside her there. The bakery's late-December closure will allow Larios the chance a reprieve from years of long days. The Larios family will continue to operate El Ta'comelon, the mostly outdoor taco stand at 3375 Harold Drive NE open only on weekend evenings.

The Food Truckers

Salem's food truck boom is still going



Beer bar (and growler-fill station) Growl Movement has closed their location on South Commercial. CAPI LYNN/STATESMAN JOURNAL

strong, with newcomers joining the game at a steady pace. Some are moving from trucks to restaurants, some are moving the other direction and others have called it entirely.

Squatchy's BBQ

Squatchy's BBQ, open at 1005 N First Avenue in Stayton for just 13 months, closed in October. A Salem military family launched the brick-and-mortar business last year after news of their food truck catching fire went viral and strangers donated \$28,000 to a crowd-funding campaign. Fortunately, for barbecue lovers, owner Jason Lorraine has resumed operations of Squatchy's BBQ as a big red food truck popping up at various locations around town.

Father Hen's

Dan Bowling opened Father Hen's Texas BBQ in December 2018, coinciding with the opening of The Yard Food Park on State Street. He operated the orange barbecue trailer until August. Bowling hopes to relaunch Father Hen's as a job training and social enterprise-focused business at a later date.

Pandan Leaf Hawaiian

In August, only four months after opening colorful Hawaiian-Filipino fusion cafe Pandan Leaf, Jaysen Ridout and Sylvia Ocampo closed it. A nearly identical menu is available at The Yard in a food trailer called Get Seom Aloha, owned by Christie Pahl Ocampo.

Big Blue Thai

In May, Big Blue Thai owners Kanyanat Puthdee and Ray Johnson closed their Royvonne Avenue restaurant to return to their Candalaria food trailer. According to state filings, the address will soon be home to a new restaurant from Vichuda Stine, owner of Keizer's Bai Bua Thai Kitchen, called Bangkok Thai Bistro. Puthdee and Johnson, meanwhile, are back in a steady groove at their trailer.

NorthBlock Food Cart Pod

Though not formally dismantled, the NorthBlock Food Cart pod is functionally defunct. Changes began when Salem's First Baptist Church (owner of the property at 695 Liberty Street NE) temporarily leased the space that had previously housed NorthBlock's dining area, to JE Dunn, the company working on construction of the new Salem Police Department headquarters across the street. Big Dave's Sample This Barbecue and other food carts previously associated with the pod continue to pop-up elsewhere.

High on the Hog

Ken and Armenda Hayes debuted their first food truck, High on the Hog BBQ & Sweets, in March at Beehive Station. Six months later, they pulled the

truck from Beehive and from Salem in general. The couple continues to operate a second High on the Hog truck at The Barn at Hickory Station, Albany's newly-opened food pod at 640 Hickory Street NW. They have refurbished the first cart and reopened it at The Barn as Cheese and Thank You, specializing in grilled cheese sandwiches and soup.

Casa Rojas

Jorge Jimenez sold Casa Rojas Mexican Restaurant & Cantina to couple Oscar Flores and Isabel Hernandez in May. Flores and Hernandez have reopened it as La Vida Catrina Kitchen of Mexico. Previously they operated a food truck called Don Flores Mexican Cuisine in Tigard. In Salem, they offer upscale takes on Mexican cuisine, including Prime skirt steak fajitas, shrimp and crab enchiladas, and fresh halibut tacos with baja cream sauce.

The Corporate Departures

In-N-Out arrived, the biggest splash of the year in terms of Salem area restaurants, but meanwhile the following big businesses ducked out.

Quiznos Keizer

The Salem area's final remaining location of Quiznos Subs at 5133 River Road N in Keizer's Sandy River shopping plaza closed in February. A few months later, Vichuda Stine (who opened Tup Tim Thai Cuisine on South Commercial Street in 2012) leased the space and opened Bai Bua Thai Kitchen.

Newport Seafood Grill

After 22 years at 1717 Freeway Court NE, Newport Seafood Grill closed suddenly in October. The business' Seattle-based parent company Restaurants Unlimited had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in July, and was then sold to Houston-based Landry's Inc. (operator of national chain restaurants including Morton's The Steakhouse and Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.). The Salem location and all other remaining Newport Seafood Grill locations were closed the following week.

The Rock Wood Fired Pizza

Six years after opening, The Rock closed its Center Street location after service on Memorial Day. In 2020 the space is slated to become a new location of Korean barbecue restaurant Kkoki BBQ, a regional brand with locations in Beaverton, Portland and Eugene.

Big Town Hero

Salem's last remaining Big Town Hero location, at 3405 Commercial Street SE, closed in January. The space is now home to Ibendoo, Salem's only restaurant dedicated to ramen.

The Quick Changes

These restaurants closed, but shifted so quickly into something else you might not have noticed it.

Caffe 680

Sassy Onion's former lunch spot at 680 Hawthorne Avenue SE got a quick redesign in mid-July to become a second location of downtown Salem's Sweetly Baked. The location represents an expanded collaboration between the two businesses. Alongside Sweetly Baked owner Christine Mathews' cupcakes and cookies are a limited selection of Sassy Onion salads, sandwiches and wraps.

Muchas Gracias

All of the former Muchas Gracias Mexican Food restaurants in Salem have closed. Franchise owners have transformed all of the locations that once housed them into Habaneros and Victorico's, two new concepts with very similar menus. Fear not, both still have the Oregon burrito.

Roxy Dawgs

Downtown Salem hot dog stop, Roxy Dawgs, closed the location at 324 Church Street NE. They said they're currently looking for a new location for the business. In the meantime, Armando and Eva Ornelas are renovating the space. On January 2 they will open a new restaurant called Las Gorditas Ricas serving casual Mexican fare.

The Independents

It's especially sad to lose locally-owned, neighborhood businesses.

The Doughnut Shop in Stayton

Le Cordon Bleu baking grad Katie Peters and husband Michael closed their business, Stayton's The Doughnut Shop back in May. They've recently announced plans to open a new spot in Keizer's former Fortaleza Bakery space for their new venture. will soon open Wicked Sweet Bakery in Keizer at 3852 River Road North.

Shotski's

A fire, a lawsuit, and "an unexpected hemorrhaging of money," finally put Shotski's down in late July. Known for live music and drag shows, the venue changed hands multiple times since it first opened as Shotski's Woodfired Eats in 2015. Jonah Fenn and Katie Caccamise were forced to close just six months after taking ownership.

Pip's Gourmet Dogs & Ice Cream

Molalla hot dog spot Pip's closed on December 7. In a post to the business' Facebook page the owners said that with increased costs associated with food, labor and rent they couldn't compete with corporate chains in the area.

Krewe Du Soul

Owners Steve and Jen Stephens made the decision to close their cajun restaurant, located in the Willamette Heritage Center, in July after about a year and a half in business. They cited low foot traffic in the space as a factor.

Growl Movement

Draft beer bar and growler-fill station Growl Movement consolidated, closing the six year old location on South Commercial. The location in Keizer at 5137 River Road N remains open. Their former space at , 2990 Commercial Street SE, is now a bubble tea and sweet shop called Sweet Spot Fruit Tea & Desserts.

Emily Teel is the Food & Drink Editor at the Statesman Journal. Contact her at eteel@statesmanjournal.com, Facebook, or Twitter.

Ranchers

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The Wahls operated a beef cattle and sheep ranching facility about 3 miles away, at 34696 Swank Drive SE in Albany.

They previously had raised sheep for Wyoming-based Mountain States Lamb Cooperative, for which Mark Wahl had

served as secretary.

The Wahls held a permit from the Oregon Department of Agriculture allowing them to operate a confined animal feeding operation with up to 1,092 animals.

Among the permit's requirements was proper disposal of dead animals, which could include careful burial, composting or taking to certain landfills. Animal carcasses cannot be burned in the open.

The Agriculture Department did not cite or fine the Wahls in connection with the incident because the animals were not burned on the ranch property, ODA spokeswoman Andrea Cantu-Schomus said.

ODA had cited, but not fined, the couple four other times since 2013 for permit violations including illegal manure and wastewater discharge to a ditch and potentially to groundwater; failing to report a discharge; improper manure stor-

age; and failure to pay CAFO license fees.

The permit was canceled earlier this month at Mark Wahl's request, Cantu-Schomus said.

DEQ also cited, but did not fine, the couple for leaving an open burn unattended.

Contact the reporter at tloew@statesmanjournal.com, 503-399-6779 or follow at Twitter.com/Tra-cy_Loew