

# Restaurants and eateries that closed permanently in 2020

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USA TODAY NETWORK

Coronavirus made 2020 a devastating year for small businesses, and none more so than restaurants.

More than 110,000 restaurants — representing one in six U.S. eateries — closed throughout the country in 2020 according to the December results of a nationwide survey by the National Restaurant Association.

Salem's dining scene was more resilient than some, especially those in bigger cities where staggering numbers of businesses shuttered.

Nonetheless, at least 35 Mid-Valley restaurants and food carts closed up shop this year, compared to 25 the year prior and 19 in 2018. The closures can largely, though not entirely, be attributed to the impact of the pandemic.

This list does not include the growing number of restaurants that have closed temporarily with plans to reopen when they can resume indoor service. Listed alphabetically, the casualties are as follows.

## Birdie's Bistro

A favorite daytime destination for many, Birdie's Bistro was beloved for its salads, sandwiches and pastries, especially among the downtown breakfast and lunch crowd. Shana and Toy Schmidt founded the business in Keizer in 2012 in the River Road space that is now Gyro Stop. Katrina and Aaron Beale bought the restaurant and moved it to the Equitable Center in December 2017. They closed in October 2020.

## Bite Me Foods

The food cart version of Esther Saunders' business closed in The Yard Food Park, but Bite Me Foods lives on as an on-line bakery specializing in chocolate truffles, hand-made candies and Disneyland-inspired treats for pick-up or mail order.

## Bob's Burger Express

The two remaining locations of Bob's Burger Express, located in Salem Center and Willamette Town Center, both closed pre-pandemic. Originally founded in 1955 by Bob Corey, the local burger chain was beloved for its 19-cent hamburgers. There were once 15 locations in Oregon. Gina and Larry Dankenbring resurrected the Bob's Burgers brand, after the previous owners filed for bankruptcy. They continue to serve Bob's Burgers under the umbrella of Golden Grill, their restaurant, catering and concessions business.

## BonJapan 86 Yaroku

Muneaki Sugie closed BonJapan86 Yaroku, his four-year-old restaurant on 12th Street, in November. Known for "ofukuro no aji" or Japanese comfort food, guests celebrated Sugie's bento boxes, tempura, Japanese curry, udon, and rice bowls. Sugie said he hopes to open a food truck in the future, but no plans have been finalized.

## Bossi's BBQ

Megan Bossi, Salem's barbecue queen, served her final brisket, nacho cheese and jalapeño sandwich at Beehive Station in July. Bossi launched her barbecue business in 2019, popping up in Dallas before moving her cart to Salem. Though she had been able to operate steadily through the pandemic, rising costs and fluctuating availability of meat cut into the food cart's margins. That, said Bossi, combined with the pressure of distance learning for her kids, made con-



**The Bananas Foster waffle at the Cast Iron Cafe on Nov. 14, 2019 in Mount Angel, Ore.** MADELEINE COOK / STATESMAN JOURNAL

tinuing operations unfeasible. Bossi said she hopes to return to barbecue at some point in the future.

## Cast Iron Cafe

Joshua and Elisha Nightingale, owners of Silverton's Live Local Marketplace & Café opened a second business in Mt. Angel in Nov. 2019. Cast Iron Cafe was a homey breakfast and lunch spot with skillet-sized cinnamon rolls. The impact of the pandemic forced them to close the new business just a few months later. In Nov. 2020, Leonel Uribe opened a taqueria called El Caporal in the 415 Main Street space.

## CR Snell's Custom Pizza

One of the original vendors at The Yard Food Park, C.R. Snell's Custom Pizza departed in October 2019. The business relocated to Woodburn, but struggled to connect with a new customer base. By the time coronavirus restrictions went into effect, said Maria Snell, she and husband Rick had already decided to close.

## Courtyard Cafe

Tony and Tori Garcia had big dreams when they bought Dallas' Courtyard Cafe in fall 2019. They renovated the breakfast and lunch spot, but when coronavirus arrived in Oregon the couple realized they didn't have the resources yet banked to maintain operations amidst the pandemic. Tino Land and Augustin "Jay" Razo opened a third Azuls Taco House location in the Dallas storefront. Tony Garcia said they hope to revisit the possibility of opening another restaurant sometime in the future.

## El Patron Mexican Grill

Keizer's El Patron Mexican Grill closed in early March after five years in business, toppled by the pressure brought on by COVID-19. A family-friendly spot beloved for fajitas, El Patron was also the first restaurant to offer locally-made La Familia Cider on draft. The Chicken Shack Keizer opened in the former El Patron space in September.

## Firepit Wandering Kitchen

Rebecca and Ryan Fineran closed their mobile food business, Firepit Wandering Kitchen, over the summer. Beloved for meaty burgers, sausage sandwiches, tacos and more, Firepit popped up regularly around town and also had a steady presence at Barrel & Keg. In January, they opened a third location at Salem Ale Works. Rebecca Fineran said slow sales and the vulnerability of the pandemic were major factors in their decision to cease operations entirely.

## The Glockenspiel

After 12 years of service, Mt. Angel's Glockenspiel Restaurant and Pub closed at the start of 2020 when co-owners Ernie and Henri Dill and Mike and Mary Grant retired. At the time they hoped to either find a buyer for the restaurant space or the right tenant

to lease it as a turn-key operation and reinvent a new version of the Glockenspiel Restaurant's concept. The space remains in limbo.

## Happy Jing & Sichuan Giants

Kress Chan and his parents called Happy and Jing, operated Happy Jing in Silverton for 10 years before relocating to Portland Road in June 2017. Ready to retire, they passed operations of the business to Chan's uncle, Xiong Kang Zhen, in February. Zhen reopened it as Sichuan Giants and added bento boxes, Japanese and Sichuan dishes. The changes were short-lived. The restaurant quietly closed mid-year.

## Homegrown Grub

Another of the original vendors at The Yard, Homegrown Grub offered scratch-made sandwiches, salads and soups. Oregon Culinary Institute grad Brienne Taylor closed the cart at the start of the year.

## Hopheads

Hopheads Bottleshop & Brewpub closed in February 8. Owner James Carter opened Hopheads with a plan of showcasing what he called at the time "beers of style," from artisan breweries. He and brewer Scott Shambaugh also ran Salem's most boutique brewing program, exclusively selling their brews through the taproom itself. Carter said slow sales forced him to reduce inventory and ultimately close the business. Sisters Irish Bistro has since relocated to the former Hopheads space on High Street.

## Independence Grill & Bar

Barely a year after Jeanne Greenberg bought Independence Grill & Bar from founder Gregg Peterson, the Independence family restaurant closed indefinitely at the start of the pandemic. Greenberg said issues with the building at 154 S Main Street were major factors in the decision to close. She hopes to reopen another food business, likely a smaller cafe, at some point post-pandemic.

## Kyoto Japanese

A Salem destination for sushi and teppanyaki, Kyoto Japanese Restaurant, closed in November. Owners Sue and Sam Koizumi had operated the business for 37 years. They closed temporarily at the start of the pandemic. Though they reopened over the summer, pandemic operating restrictions were difficult for them to manage because of the style of the restaurant. At a table built to seat eight, Sue said, they were serving parties of two or four, and "we only have seven tables." Phased reopening requirements prohibited seating guests at their sushi bar. These factors combined, said Koizumi, "that's not enough business."

## The Portland Press

The Portland Press, Brandon and Aaron Appel's gluten-free waffle sandwich spot at Fork Forty, announced plans to close in September. They at-

tributed the closure to the combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and area wildfires. The Portland Press was the first vendor to sign on to open inside the food hall a year ago. Troy Campbell has since opened Uncle Troy's BBQ in the former The Portland Press location.

## Pressed Coffee

Mateasa and Kirk Bathke closed their downtown Dallas cafe and venue Pressed Coffee after service on Dec. 31. The couple purchased Pressed from previous owners in March 2019. Without being able to operate normally, offering trivia, live music, and open mic nights, business was too slow to keep them going. They're deciding whether to liquidate the business entirely or try to reopen in the future in a space with a smaller footprint.

## Red Ginger

A Keizer destination for Thai food for a decade, Red Ginger closed without announcement over the summer. Owners Amanda Singharaj and Perry Sinasone could not be reached for comment. El Vaquero Santa Maria BBQ, a new business specializing in a style of barbecue from the central coast of California, opened in the space in September, but is now temporarily closed until indoor dining can resume.

## The Ritz

The Ritz, a longstanding diner on Lancaster Drive SE, ceased operations at the end of October. "I didn't plan to close," said operator Adam McCormick, but "the day just came I had to admit I can't do this anymore." Mallory Ramey, McCormick's fiancé, launched a crowdfunding campaign with the goal of raising \$75,000 to pay back rent and bills to reopen. To date, the campaign has raised \$1,253.

## Robert's Crossing

A Salem destination for date-night dining and holiday celebrations for a decade, Roberts Crossing was the first restaurant to publicly announce a closure after Oregon reopened under phase 1 restrictions. Owner Jeff Glodt said the restaurant's higher-priced menu made it more vulnerable than his other two restaurants, locations of Grain Station Brew Works in Monmouth and McMinnville. Market and cafe Lively Station opened in the former Robert's Crossing space on Dec. 16.

## Salem Ale Works

After seven years of "putting the ale in Salem," Jake Bonham and

Justin Ego closed their brewery Salem Ale Works at the end of August. Typically, Bonham said, 80% to 90% of the beer S.A.W brewed was sold in the brewery's 25th Street taphouse. They pivoted towards canned beers, but the volume wasn't there. Bonham said, "looking out into fall and winter without any sort of change, we just didn't really see a way forward."

## Sal's Deli & Bistro

Year-old Pringle Plaza deli Sal's closed in spring, but owner Aaron Heath remains a partner in Valiant the Sandwich, which opened in the Sal's space. Valiant is the first restaurant from Joshua Anderson, most recently the chef of Avid Cider's Pearl District taphouse, and already feels like a fixture in the Salem dining scene.

## Saigon Vietnamese Restaurant & Grill

After 18 years running the homey Vietnamese eatery on Court Street beloved for vermicelli bowls, pho, and bánh mì on freshly baked rolls, owners Hien Tran and Dong Nguyen were ready to retire. The couple closed Saigon Vietnamese Restaurant in March just before the first coronavirus dining restrictions began. 477 Court Street NE is now home to fast casual restaurant Pasta Crafted Eatery.

## Samurai Madame

Owners Mar'cia and Marty Schrock closed Samurai Madame, downtown Silverton's hybrid sushi/poke destination and bakery, in early February after two years in business. Paul Lieggi, formerly executive chef at Mt. Angel Abbey, opened

Fin + Fowl Kitchen in the storefront. Lieggi's concept is a fitting successor, specializing in ramen, rice bowls, salads, and some sushi bento boxes.

## Sav's Thai Kitchen

Monmouth food truck Sav's Thai had a good year, said owner Savannah Randolph, but in mid-December she announced the truck would be closing permanently. The decision, she said, wasn't about the pandemic. "I just didn't enjoy the job as much as I was hoping and missed the stability of a regular office job. I told myself I had to try it for at least a year to give myself time to see if it was a right fit for me."

## Shawerma Owok

Shawerma Owok, a red food truck across from the Roth's Vista location in South Salem, was one of few places locally specializing in Middle Eastern sandwiches, platters and salads, all crowned with a swizzle of pungent garlic sauce. Open since summer 2017, the truck was a mother-son venture of Amal Idris and Mohammad Hasan. They closed the businesses temporarily at the start of the pandemic and reopened in summer. But sales were so slow, Hasan said, they closed for good in September. New food truck Don Chuy's Tacos has since taken up residence in the space. *Emily Teel is the Food & Drink Editor at the Statesman Journal. Contact her at eteel@statesmanjournal.com, Facebook, or Twitter. See what she's cooking and where she's eating this week on Instagram: @emily\_teel*



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