

# Salem's sandwich heroes

Throughout the pandemic, this humble meal has sustained us many times

Emily Teel | Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

More than a year into some level of coronavirus restrictions on restaurant service, take-out is more important than ever before and portability has become a favorable attribute for many a restaurant meal. ● Through the pandemic, the humble sandwich has steadfastly sustained us. ● Car meals, porch picnics, and suppers solo, the tried and true all-in-one meal has offered us comfort and consistency in the form of loaded carbohydrates in a time of so much uncertainty. ● What follows is a salute to some of Salem's sandwich makers, those who have kept us fed this year with tortas, subs, boxed lunches, and Dagwood-worthy stacks, even as they pivoted from reliable customer bases. As the restaurant industry weathered the storm of the pandemic, Salem's sandwich heroes have continued to offer us sustenance along the way.

## The Newcomer: El Sazon de Mi Casa

Don't forget to ask for a stack of napkins for a visit to Keizer food cart El Sazon de Mi Casa.

Sisters Marta and Vilma Chan opened the business last October along with Vilma's partner Christian Franco. The cart's primary sandwich artist, Franco slings burritos, tacos, and quesadillas, but it's El Sazon's tortas that have put it on the map.

The reason for the extra napkins? These tortas are absolute units, loaded with multiple types of meat. The Fuego is stuffed with marinated pork, bacon, habanero, pineapple and two kinds of cheese; while the Salvaje includes marinated beef, hot dog, breaded chicken, mozzarella, tomatoes and lettuce.

Tender telera rolls barely contain the abundant fillings. There's a gluttonous exuberance to them and a caloric density that could satisfy the intense hunger of athletic exertion, a day of yard work, or a spring cleaning marathon.

**Where:** 4415 River Rd N Keizer  
**Phone:** (503) 507-8738  
**Information:** @El Sazon de Mi Casa (Facebook)



Joshua Anderson with Valiant Sandwich prepares to go orders. ABIGAIL DOLLINS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

## The Hidden Gem: Little Lois Cafe

Before the pandemic, most of Little Lois Cafe's business came from making boxed lunches for city workers. The cafe, which is tucked away in the same West Salem business complex as Xicha Brewing, ferried deliveries all over town, primarily to businesses and government buildings.

Owners Rex and Lois Robertson have spent years honing the customer service model of their sandwich shop to accommodate contracts like these, offering an online group ordering platform for individuals to customize orders in one delivery. You may have seen their red vehicles, branded with a cartoon caricature of Lois, driving around town.

But when so many of their clients shifted to a work-from-home model, the cafe was forced to pivot. They began offering the same delivery service to people at home.

The upside is that a whole new group of diners have gotten to experience Little Lois' sandwiches. The menu is mostly tried-and-true combinations, thoughtfully assembled.

There's Albacore tuna salad with sweet pickles, a BLT with avocado, and a roasted chicken breast with bacon, Swiss cheese, lettuce, tomato and ranch dressing.

Visit the cafe itself, and the business also offers a menu of hot sandwiches unavailable for delivery. There's a French dip, a hot reuben, and "The Really Good Chicken Sandwich," roasted chicken on toasted sourdough with bacon, artichoke spread and balsamic vinegar.

There's nothing you haven't seen before, but that's part of what makes Little Lois so enjoyable; it's the diner basics done well.

**Where:** 576 Patterson St NW STE 110  
**Phone:** (503) 362-8422  
**Information:** littleloiscafe.com

## The Classic: Cozzie's NY Deli

Fat stacks of pastrami, cappicola, or corned beef on marble rye, Cozzie's NY Deli is Salem's only proper deli, the closest you're gonna get to a When Harry Met Sally sandwich experience in the cherry city.

Whether you call it a hoagie, a sub, a grinder or, as owner Dave Cozzie does, a wedge, these are sandwiches loaded



The chicken cutlet sandwich at Cozzie's NY Deli in Salem, on Jan. 19. BRIAN HAYES/STATESMAN JOURNAL

with the flavors found in the largely Italian and Jewish delis of East Coast cities.

Cozzie moved to Oregon from Connecticut in the late '90s. Missing the sandwiches he sustained himself on while working as an audio engineer, he and his wife Deborah opened Cozzie's in an industrial pocket of Salem near The Hoop.

A frequent stop for industrial and construction workers, the business saw major changes to their customer base as the pandemic sent workers packing.

Cozzie credits the Chamber of Commerce's Facebook page Salem Eats for introducing the business to a new audience. Sandwich fans have flocked to try Cozzie's version of a meatball sub, a chicken cutlet, a reuben and The Gabagool (capicola, Genoa salami, mortadella and provolone with pickle paste and roasted sweet red peppers).

**Where:** 3723 Fairview Industrial Drive  
**Phone:** 503-990-7913  
**Information:** cozziesnydeli.com

## The Visionary: Valiant the Sandwich

A rotating menu, seasonal specials and artisan ingredients are features one might expect at a trendy bistro, but at a sandwich shop? That's exactly what you'll find at Valiant the Sandwich.

Before he opened Valiant a year ago

on Pringle Park Plaza, Joshua Anderson was most recently the chef of Avid Cider's Pearl District taphouse and helped develop the pizza recipes at Gilgamesh Brewing's Independence restaurant, The River.

His goal for Valiant was to offer a focus on flavor and attention to detail, even applied to something as casual as a sandwich. The concept made Valiant a runaway favorite among Salem diners who flocked to try sandwiches with clever, punny names, unexpected combinations and top shelf ingredients.

The Self-Titled Turkey is roast turkey breast, housemade tomato-basil jam, herbed goat cheese, arugula and tomato. The Banh Mi-ish combines seared pork belly confit, Olympia Provisions paté, house-pickled carrots and jalapeños, cucumber, cilantro, and spicy tamar mayo on a toasted bolillo roll. Anderson has also made fans among those trying to eat less meat, offering meat-free and vegan sandwiches that are just as thoughtfully assembled as the rest. Don't miss the biscuit-based breakfast sandwiches, potentially the best in Salem.

Just when you think you've tried every sandwich in Anderson's arsenal, he changes it up and adds something new.

**Where:** 315 High St SE, Pringle Park Plaza  
**Phone:** 503-689-1821  
**Information:** valianteats.com

# Vaccine

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National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, in an April USA Today article. "But it won't happen until the summer at the earliest, and all this depends on getting the B.1.1.7 variant (first identified in the U.K.) under control and expanding vaccination coverage."

More than 700,000 Oregonians have been fully vaccinated so far. Oregon officials identified 168 cases as of April 2 in which vaccinated individuals tested positive for the virus more than two weeks after their final dose. Three of those people died.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control is trying to debunk myths about the vaccines. According to the CDC:

● You should be vaccinated even if you already had COVID-19, because experts don't know how long immunity from the illness lasts. If you were treated with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you should wait 90 days before getting the vaccine.

● There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any fertility problems or problems with pregnancy.

● COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.

● Getting a COVID-19 vaccine won't make you test positive for COVID-19 on a

viral test. You may test positive on some antibody tests, which indicate you had a previous infection.

## How is Oregon fighting vaccine hesitancy?

The Oregon Health Authority is running targeted public education and advertisements to increase vaccine confidence, including in rural areas, OHA's Hernández said.

One campaign, "Oregon COVID-19 Vaccine Information" is running ads on Facebook, Pinterest, Reddit, Quora, WebMD and other websites.

"The campaign is aimed at increasing vaccine confidence, testifying to the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines, framing vaccination as a path back to the people, places, and things we love, and affirming that it's OK to have questions — demystifying the vaccination process by sharing stories of normal folks (including non-urban areas) who have chosen to get vaccinated and why," Hernández said.

Oregon also is holding special clinics to reach people who might face barriers to getting the vaccine, including those with a mistrust of government.

For example, during April, OHA will partner with FEMA and Morrow and Malheur counties to hold a series of vaccine clinics for migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Boardman, Irrigon and Heppner.

Lincoln County held vaccine clinics



People wait in line to receive their COVID-19 vaccine at the Oregon State Fairgrounds. ABIGAIL DOLLINS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

focused on reaching seafood, agricultural, fish processing and seasonal and migrant workers.

"While OHA remains a trusted source of accurate information for providers and the community, we also acknowledge the historical mistrust within some communities toward governmental public health authorities. That's why we are working with and supporting trusted community partners with outreach," Hernández said.

"We're connecting our experts direct-

ly with communities through activities like Facebook live events, weekly community webinars, and ongoing presentations in partnership with trusted community organizations. That will continue as we move forward with the rollout," she said.

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