

State removes Russian vodka from shelves

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Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission directed liquor stores Monday to stop selling all Russian-made distilled spirits. The decision was made in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

These brands include: Russian Standard, Hammer and Sickle, Beluga Noble, Jewel of Russia and Green Mark.

Other varieties of vodka will still be available for purchase, including those branded with Russian names, as long as they are not purchased from distilleries in Russia.

"The OLCC understands that there are times when we must respond to a higher calling in the interest of humanity, and this is a but a small step the OLCC and the State of Oregon can take," Paul Rosenbaum, chair of the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission, said.

According to the OLCC, about 5,000 bottles of Russian-made liquor are at 281 liquor stores across the state. More than 6,200 bottles are in OLCC warehouses.

Liquor stores have started removing bottles of Russian-made liquor from their shelves and the OLCC has stopped fulfilling orders for those products, the agency said.

Several other states have already tak-

en this largely symbolic step, including Utah, New Hampshire, Ohio and Pennsylvania. This is not a gesture the government in most states can make; only 17 states control alcohol sales at wholesale level, with 13 of those also controlling retail sales.

Meanwhile, as of late Monday, Russian forces continued to assault major Ukrainian cities.

Gov. Kate Brown released a statement Monday stating Oregon would welcome any Ukrainian refugees and that she has been in contact with the White House about what Oregon can do to aid the Ukrainian people.

Early reports estimate nearly 500,000 Ukrainians have fled the coun-

try in the five days since Russia's invasion began.

Brown also condemned Russia's attack on its neighbor, calling it "egregious and unprovoked."

"The actions of the Russian government are not the actions of the Russian people," she said. "We value our Russian community here in Oregon, and many Russian families are being impacted by this conflict. As Oregonians, let's all unite together for peace."

Reporter Connor Radnovich covers the Oregon Legislature and state government. Contact him at cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com or 503-399-6864, or follow him on Twitter at @CDRadnovich.

'I've been dreaming of this day'

Salem chef is a 2022 James Beard Foundation Award semifinalist

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Jonathan Jones, chef and one of the owners of Epilogue Kitchen & Cocktails in downtown Salem, has been named a 2022 semifinalist for "Best Chef in the Northwest Region" by the James Beard Foundation.

The James Beard Foundation Awards, long considered the Oscars of the food world, "recognize exceptional talent and achievement" in culinary arts, hospitality, media and overall food systems nationwide, according to the website's mission statement. Awards are based on nominations sent to the foundation, which are then considered by volunteer committees.

Restaurant and chef semifinalists were announced Feb. 23. The winners will be announced in May.

Among the other 20 chefs in the category, Jones is the only one from Salem and one of four from Oregon. The other Oregon chefs are all from Portland: Carlo Lamagna of Magna Kuisina, Vince Nguyen of Berlu and Thomas Pishaduffy of Oma's Hideaway.

The cozy, colorful 50-seat restaurant at 130 High St. SE has a menu that Jones changes up often, offering crabcake benedict, meatball subs, breakfast cereal french toast, vegetarian biscuits and gravy, porkchops.

Jones said the news of his recognition took him by surprise.

"I got a 'congratulations' message from an account I follow on Instagram," Jones said. "I didn't even know what he was talking about."

He said when he officially heard of his award, he thought it wasn't real. In the past few years, Jones said many folks have said and written things online to harass and "mess with him," and he thought it was just happening again. He had to double-check the official awards site.

He said it's an honor and that he's still riding the high that this award has been.

"I've been dreaming of this day and you work so hard to get such an honor - it's still surreal that I was even nominated," Jones said. "This award has usually been to restaurants and folks in bigger markets like Seattle, Portland, L.A. and New York, but it's great to be recognized in this smaller market."

Road to recognition

Jones opened Epilogue Kitchen with his partner Maura Ryan in 2019, after finding success with their pop-up Prologue Kitchen. Prior to the pop-up, he also worked at Word of Mouth, Taproot



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Lounge & Cafe and Santiam Wine & Bistro, as well as a hand at Cristom Vineyards, Salem Ale Works and Isaac's Downtown.

Jones is one of the few Black restaurant owners in Salem and has been a leader in local activism efforts. Since the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Johnson, there are portraits of the two in the front window of the restaurant, as well as the names of others killed in cases of police brutality written in white marker. A shelf at the front of the restaurant holds books by Black authors and others covering the topic of racism for patrons to borrow.

Jones, a member of the local Black Lives Matter chapter, said his identity and the happenings in the world are integral to his beliefs and his business, including being anti-racist and anti-fascist.

He said folks have harassed him online, leaving reviews and comments in posts that have insulted Jones and his restaurant. In addition to his leadership on anti-racism efforts, his is also one of the few restaurants in Salem that requires diners provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination.

After the past couple of years of struggles, Jones said, this award is a reminder that he and the restaurant have great loyal customers, and he appreciates every patron who has dined inside.

"What I love most is being able to feed people," Jones said.



Crab cakes with blue crab, Ritz crackers, Old Bay remoulade, corn relish and microgreens at Epilogue Kitchen & Cocktails. ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Other semifinalists to try

Here are some other Northwest James Beard Awards semifinalists to try out:

- Outstanding restaurateur: Akkapong "Earl" Ninsom, Langbaan, Hat Yai, Eem, and others, Portland.
- Outstanding restaurant: The Wal-

rus and the Carpenter, Seattle.

- Emerging chef: Kristi Brown, Communion, Seattle.
- Emerging chef: Thuy Pham, Mama Dút, Portland.
- Outstanding baker: Pamela Vuong, The Flour Box, Seattle.
- Outstanding wine program: Hiyu Wine Farm, Hood River.

Investigation: 118 restaurant workers shortchanged \$169K

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In an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Wage and Hour division found KKOKI Korean BBQ restaurant owners in Salem, Portland and Eugene shortchanged 118 employees nearly \$170,000.

Managers took a portion of workers' tips, paid overtime only after workers worked 86 hours rather than the 40 hours per week as outlined in the Fair Labor Standards Act and the employer failed to keep accurate employee records, the report stated.

A total of \$169,728 was recovered, representing \$84, 864 in back wages and an equal amount in liquidated damages. Additionally, the division issued \$30,199 in penalties for the "willful nature of the employer's violations," the report read.

Kkoki Korean BBQ owners were not available for comment. Kkoki has four locations in Oregon, the first established in Beaverton on Canyon Road. Their other locations include Portland,



Kkoki Korean BBQ in Salem on July 8, 2020. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Eugene and its latest addition is in Salem, which opened in 2020. Salem's location is owned by Anthony An, who opened and operated the other locations, and Raymond Lin, real estate developer of Keizer's Raymond Development Inc.

Related: Hot Grill Summer: Kkoki, Salem's new Korean barbecue restaurant, now open

In the 2021 fiscal year, the Wage and

Hour division conducted 4,327 investigations in the food service industry and recovered \$34.7 million in back wages for more than 29,000 employees nationwide.

"Restaurant industry workers are paid some of the country's lowest wages, yet many put themselves at risk throughout the pandemic to serve their customers and help employers keep their businesses open," said Carrie

Aguilar, Wage and Hour Division Director in Portland.

"Wage theft, like that found in this case, hurts these essential workers and their families. Business owners must understand that violations can limit their ability to recruit and retain people who do these jobs.

"As we've seen, the pandemic has prompted many restaurant industry workers to find employment that better suits their needs and find jobs with employers who will pay them all the wages they have earned."

For more information about the FLSA and other laws enforced by the division, contact its toll-free helpline at 866-4US-WAGE (487-9243). Learn more about the Wage and Hour Division, including a search tool to use if you think you may be owed back wages collected by the division.

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