

WEST CAFÉ

Owners: Doug Smith & Sean Concannon
Years in Business: 3
Address: 1201 SW Jefferson St.
Web: www.westcafedpx.com

Simply Inspired Food. This is the rallying cry and focus of one of Portland's premier, gay-owned downtown restaurants, West Café. It's hard to go wrong when the first two words of your ethos double as the bedding for the rest of your business endeavors, but that's exactly what West Café owners/couple Doug Smith and Sean Concannon have accomplished: a simply inspiring business model.

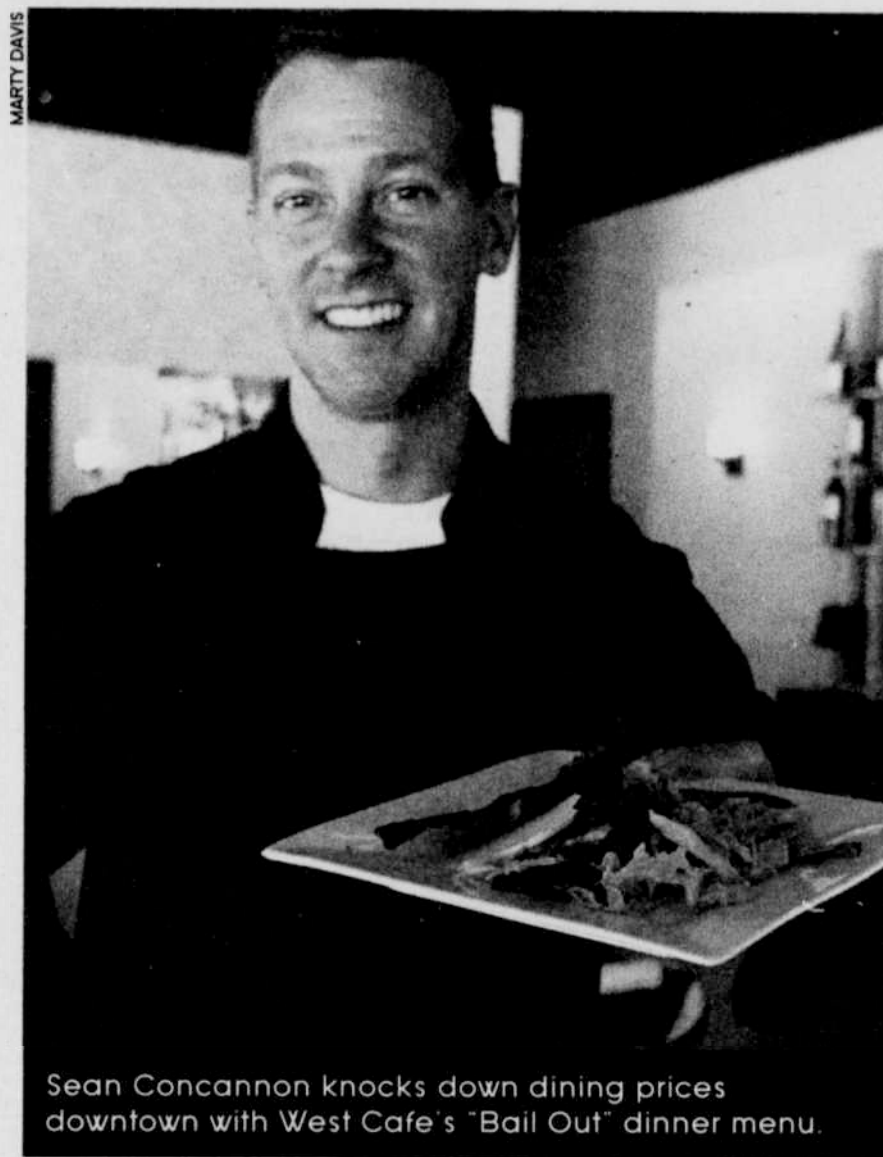
But West Café isn't all about the food, per se. Its comprehensive list of free weekly jazz entertainment—7-10 p.m. every Saturday—features local jazz luminaries like Carol Rossio or blues staples like David Brothers, and runs along with its menu of delectable entrees, wines, salads, organic pies and more for prices that won't turn your wallet into a whimpering puppy. The owners even devised a "Bail Out" dinner menu with \$10 entrees to combat any ill effects stemming from the economy.

"It has been very popular," says Concannon. "I have to say we have been enjoying a healthy, slow growth pattern, allowing us to get to know our guests."

The café's downtown locale has seen some interesting developments, most notably the approximate construction of the Eliot Tower and the Benson Tower, but the recession has brought building to a halt since Smith and Concannon opened their doors.

Concannon admits that his schedule does not permit him to be as involved as he would like in regard to West Café's contributions to Portland's gay, lesbian, bi and trans community. Still, their connections do not go unnoticed.

"We [give back] in small, nonchalant ways, but the



Sean Concannon knocks down dining prices downtown with West Café's "Bail Out" dinner menu.

organizations recognize us for caring about their causes," says Concannon.

In terms of the entrepreneurial spirit of the gay community, Concannon remarks, "Our plight for equality has been going on for many, many years. As we gain traction and acceptance, I'd like to believe we do not impose double standards. Those not in our GLBT community who accept our values should be embraced and included without judgment. It only makes us stronger and more able to move forward."

— RYAN J. PRADO

NORTHBANK TAVERN

Owners: Brent Bartling & Darrell Spoon
Address: 106 W Sixth St., Vancouver, WA
Years in Business: 20+
Web: www.myspace.com/thenorthbank

As the only GLBT bar in Clark County, Northbank Tavern is more than a bar: it's a community center where the patrons—gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight allies—sometimes feel like family.

"Our atmosphere is different than the bars in Portland," says co-owner Brent Bartling. "It's especially nice for couples who aren't looking to hook up. I have a lot of people here who feel it's part of their duty to be greeters if they see someone new."

Karaoke is a big hit with customers and Bartling plans to offer more mic nights in an effort to boost sales cut by the recession. Northbank is also well known for Lipz Cabaret, which performs on the second and fourth Saturday of the month. They'll be involved in October's grand opening of *Scream at the Beach*. In fact, their drag queens love the holiday so much they put on several Halloween cabarets throughout the year.

Northbank also hosts annual fundraisers for Martha's Pantry, a local nonprofit providing food and essentials to people living with HIV and AIDS, and Saturday in the Park, Vancouver's only Pride event.



Brent Bartling believes a friendly atmosphere is on tap at Northbank Tavern

Bartling, who is Saturday in the Park's board president, and his partner Darrell Spoon bought the Northbank Tavern in 2002 because they didn't like seeing their community bar slip into nonexistence. For the couple, this tavern holds a special place in their lives—Bartling and Spoon first met each other here 13 years ago. They were also the victims of a 1999 attack, the only major act of homophobic violence in the bar's history. But Bartling is quick to downplay the drama. Incidents of harassment are rare, especially in the seven years Bartling and Spoon have owned the bar.

"There will always be those who are never accepting, but we have to deal," says Bartling. "Most of the neighborhood downtown has been pretty accepting of us. The employees from other bars and restaurants come down and hang out and bring their friends—it's a non-issue for so many people, especially younger people."

— JENNY FURNISS



Bill Dickey

formed the current company did center around giving back to the community a certain percentage of our income, both in the form of in-kind printing and cash sponsorships," explains Dickey. "We cover a pretty broad spectrum, but we do obviously include the gay community."

The company's connection with Portland's gay, lesbian, bi and trans community includes the Gay Men's Chorus, Portland Center Stage, and QDoc, in addition to the Human Rights Campaign and Basic Rights Oregon. Dickey stresses the significance of support within the community

to strengthen it, as well as to set a good example for future generations.

"We not only should support one another in business, and try to plow our money back into the community as best we can, but we should set a good example for the younger ones coming up behind us, that you can set out on your own and make a good living and contribute to the community," says Dickey. "When you look at the huge, successful people like Bill Gates, he's giving all his money back, huge chunks. Warren Buffett's doing the same thing. It plays all the way down to our level, because people want to do business with the nice people. It's like a form of advertising, but it also has a bigger, broader impact."

— RYAN J. PRADO

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