

Birkenfeld Store Reinvented *continued from front page*

totally reinvented and the Ingraham's have added the nickname, "The Ol' House of Music."

Whatever you want to call it, the old place is now a destination for day trippers, music lovers and locals looking for a good time. The Birk experience comes complete with draught beer, great burgers, large outdoor deck with BBQ smoker grill, a large stage that hosts quality musical acts and space for over one hundred people. And there is still room to dance! The Ingraham's seem to have finally hit on the right equation to make the place profitable- food, drink and good live music looks to be the right mix.

Several years ago, when the Ingraham's started booking live music, they were bringing bar bands out to the country to entertain the locals, setting the band up on the floor near the door and moving tables to the outside walls of the small dining area to create a dance floor. Today, after all the renovations, The Birk features a large, raised stage that can hold a fairly large band comfortably. With the reduction of the store space, the room now has tables with chairs and bar style seating with stools that provides sight lines to the stage from even the farthest corner.

The small bar is in a back room and features a hand carved spruce bar, full liquor bar, wines and six beers on tap from Astoria Brewing Company. The small kitchen churns out tasty pub fare including sandwiches, salads, Saturday night dinner specials and their famous



"Smokehouse Burger." As Mike explains, Wendy has cooked in all kinds of different establishments and food genres and really, "...puts a lot of love into her food."

The staff is helpful, friendly and accommodating with an emphasis on customer service. Mike and Wendy are usually working the floor and the kitchen whenever the place gets busy, taking orders, greeting old friends and regular customers, and running food and drinks. The large outdoor deck has

tables with umbrellas and a spectacular sweeping view of pastureland and forested hillside. Inside the walls and ceilings are decorated with historic Oregon



artifacts. You also won't miss Mike's custom built chopper parked in the back corner. The most recent renovations also included the installation of a second restroom.

So, what about the music? First and foremost, Mike and Wendy Ingraham love live music. They will often go to Portland to listen to a band performing live before they book them to play at The Birk. The upstairs of the country store building used to be an old dancehall and it seems as if there is music living in the old walls and beams. Re-creating the place into a space for live music performances was a natural for the building and for the Ingrahams.

Mike is now specifically booking acts that he describes as "...bands that are trying to go somewhere." Mike has been scouring the Portland, Vancouver, Salem and Eugene regions for bands that play original music, are up and coming, and that are interested in traveling out to the country. "We've been through the garage bands and the bar bands," says Mike. On any given Saturday night you might hear blues, country, rock and roll, funky soul or a mix of all of the above. What you are sure to experience is professional musicianship in an extremely intimate environment and a fun atmosphere.

And it's not just Saturday nights for live music anymore. Recently The Birk began featuring Sunday afternoon live music events-often it's the same band that performed Saturday night and stayed over in the accommodations The Birk provides its entertainers. As they roll into the summer season The Birk

has begun scheduling some Friday evening performances as well. Fridays and Sundays are family and kid friendly. In the summer the music is occasionally

moved outdoors.

Mike has also dabbled in finding a way to present The Birk's live shows to those who can't drive all the way out to Birkenfeld. He recently installed a close circuit video system and has simulcasted several performances on the web. He is still working out all the details, but thinks this is a new opportunity to explore. In the meantime he produces a live broadcast of each show in-house; there are several monitors throughout the building for customers when they don't have a view of the stage.

If a drive to the country and a night of live music sounds like too much for one trip The Birk has made arrangements with

The Clatskanie River Inn for special rates. Just let them know you are visiting The Birk. There is also camping at several nearby locations including Big Eddy and Camp Wilkerson, (both are part of the Columbia County Park System) Anderson Park and Airport Park in Vernonia, and Stub Stewart State Park south of Vernonia on Highway 47.

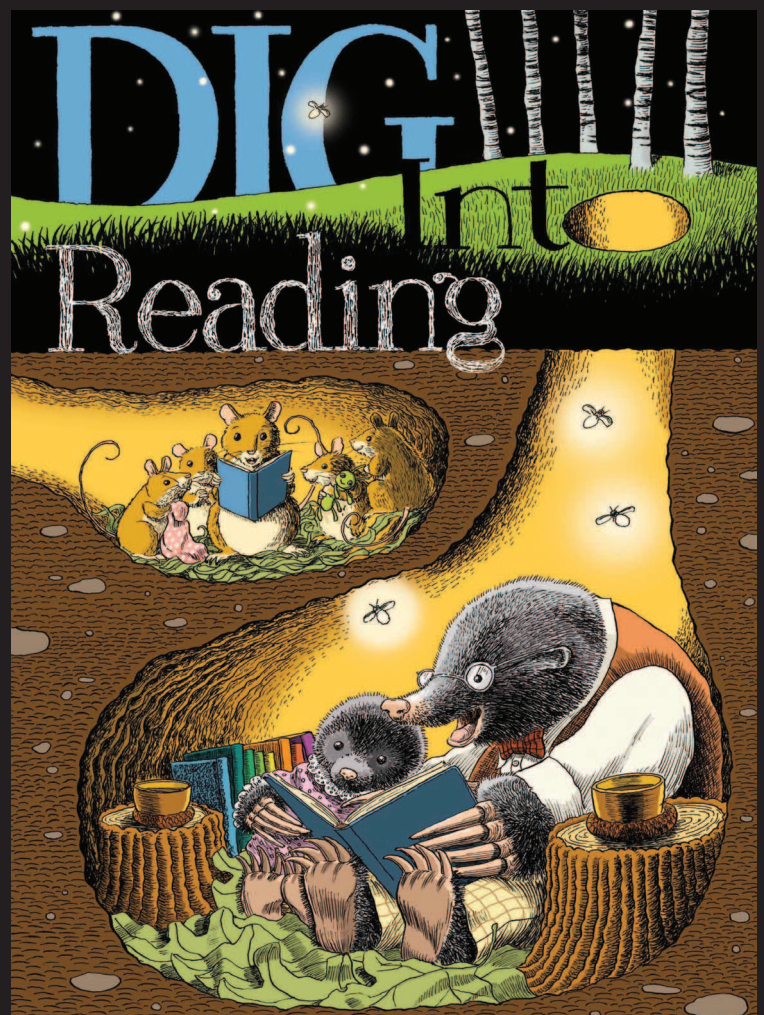
Mike says they are planning a big happening over the 4th of July weekend, so watch for details about that event. Otherwise check out their Facebook page (The Birk Birkenfeld Country Store & Cafe).

The Birk Pub & Eatery, or if you're a traditionalist, the Birkenfeld Country Store, or if you prefer nicknames, The Ol' House of Music, or as one guest told me, "I just call it 'The Roadhouse,'" is a very special place, a long way from much of anything. But the old building has some great owners who make great hosts with tremendous vision and a love of music. It seems to be working.

The Birk is located at 11139 Hwy 202, Birkenfeld. 503-755-2722



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