

ELEVATING PACIFIC NORTHWEST CUISINE

WITH ITALIAN INSPIRATION

By **ASHLEY NERBOVIG**
Coast River Business Journal

OCEAN PARK — The refrain of customers leaving MyCovio's Wednesday night made it clear how they felt about the place:

"We'll be back."

Some passersby might mistake the upscale restaurant for a beach bungalow. Small and off the main Ocean Park thoroughway, the restaurant can seat 15, maybe 18 people at a push. The nautical knickknacks fit with the restaurant being just steps from the seaside.

And the simplicity of the delicious food makes for a nice contrast to the kitschy atmosphere.

Past and the future

Before opening MyCovio's in February, Paul Klitsie, 55, owned restaurants in Vancouver, Washington and Portland, Oregon. Before that he worked in restaurants in Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland. As Klitsie chopped squash for the soup of the day on Wednesday, Nov. 6, he credited his wife, Kathy Janke, with finding the building on Bay Avenue. She prefers the atmosphere of a small town and fell in love with Ocean Park when the



MyCovio's chef and owner Paul Klitsie exits his restaurant on Wednesday Nov. 6. Klitsie opened the upscale eatery in February to the joy of many Ocean Park residents.

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couple bought a house here in 2014.

Klitsie and Janke kept an eye on the building after she saw it was for sale. The two would pass it often when they came to the beach to walk their dogs. One day the for sale sign was down and Klitsie said he was disappointed. Until Janke told him she'd liquidated some assets and purchased the property as a surprise.

Janke isn't spending as much time down at the restaurant as the pair hoped. She is working in Longview as a dental hygienist to help with the costs of open-

ing the business.

"In essence we do the same thing — I make the mouth dirty, she cleans it," Klitsie said.

Eventually, Janke will join him and spend more time at the restaurant. Even though she isn't as visible, she is essential to the business, Klitsie said. She decorated everything and she is the one with the brain for business. He cooks good food, Klitsie said. But she makes the restaurant work. They hope to run it together until they retire.

Order up

Before the restaurant opened at 4:30, server Matthew Sites commented the night would start slow because of how sunny the evening was. But minutes before half past, a couple was already waiting outside for a table.

The menu is Italian inspired, Klitsie said. He tries to use fresh fish, not frozen, if he can get it. And entrees run between \$22 to \$26. But the portions are large for fine dining and will make people feel as good as it tastes.



At left: MyCovio's Chef Paul Klitsie prepares the soup of the day with the help of Adam Gould on Wednesday Nov. 6.

MyCovio's chocolate lava cake served with a blueberry compote and whipped cream. The dessert costs \$7.



A dish of pork loin sous vide served with sweet and sour red onion, Brussels sprouts and mascarpone. The pork is cooked in water at 144 degrees for 56 minutes. It costs \$22.

"You can buy a lot of food for less, but then it goes straight through your colon," Klitsie said.

The texture of the pork loin sous vide was heavenly. And the colorful mixed greens and Dungeness crab meat was sweet and salty, giving much needed life to the final bites of the salad that always seem anticlimactic after the toppings are gone.

And while Klitsie's inventive recipes are a breath of fresh air, his light and simple tiramisu shows he is a master at his work.

The people

Cooking and serving good food is what Klitsie loves to do, it is as simple as that, he said.

As people finish their meals, Klitsie walks out from behind the bar that sepa-

MyCovio's

1311 Bay Avenue in Ocean Park, Washington
MyCovio's is open Wednesday through Sunday from 4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., except on Fridays and Saturdays when it is open until 9 p.m.
On Saturdays and Sundays the restaurant also does brunch from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Staff can be reached at 360-642-3475

rates the kitchen from the dining area and introduces himself. Some already know him and ask about Janke. All night the phone rings with people asking if there is an open table. And the real gem of the evening came when a customer asked if

the restaurant would be open Christmas Day. Klitsie told Sites he wasn't sure.

"Christmas Day," Klitsie said, quietly to himself. Almost instantly, Adam Gould, who was working in the kitchen with Klitsie said he'd work the holiday if he was needed.

It is clear customers aren't the only ones enjoying Klitsie's gentle giant vibes. His staff want to help make his restaurant a success. And Klitsie wants to give them credit.

"You can mention my name a thousand times, but it isn't just me," Klitsie said. "We're a team."

In addition to Sites and Gould, Brandy Meisner also works at MyCovio's as a server.

The future

The restaurant's name is a combina-

tion of his grandchildren's names and it is clear it is a labor of love for Klitsie and Janke.

MyCovio's doesn't take reservations. But if people are worried about getting a table, call ahead and staff will hold a spot for up to 15 minutes. And on Thursday, Nov. 7, there were still some spots open for the restaurant's Thanksgiving dinner.

While the summer kept Klitsie busy, he admitted he was nervous for the start of the slower season. But he is hopeful his regulars will keep the place in business. The support of the community meant everything to Klitsie.

"From the beginning, we had eight or nine cars parked outside 15 minutes before we opened up," Klitsie said. "We were hoping to slowly build up, but we just had to hit the ground running. Which was great."

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