

Food delivery abounds south of Columbia, lacks to the north

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Since launching two months ago, the food delivery app Slurpalicious has reached more than 20 participating eateries in Astoria and Warrenton and has made 1,600 trips. Global giant DoorDash has announced its launch this month in the same coverage area.

But while food delivery grows on the North Coast, the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington still struggles to support such a service.

Candy Yiu and Akshay Dua, who are partners in Portland restaurant Malka and run Near the Pier Guesthouse in Astoria, started Slurpalicious as a free online ordering app over the summer to help restaurants on the North Coast during the coronavirus pandemic. In February, the couple began making deliveries through the app.

“It has been actually amazing,” Yiu said. “We have learned a lot, both on the eatery side and on the driver side. One of our goals is definitely to get restaurants more orders so that they can sustain (through) the pandemic. And I think that we have achieved that quite well. In some cases, like Astoria Brewing Co., on the first day they joined, we got them 17 orders.”

Slurpalicious outlasted the short-lived North



Slurpalicious, a food delivery service launched in February, now has more than 20 participating restaurants in Astoria and Warrenton.

Coast Grub, an expansion of Rock Eats in Castle Rock, Washington, that launched on the North Coast around the same time but stopped deliveries by early March amid challenges finding drivers. The service, built on the premise of charging restaurants nothing but reposting and up-charging their menus to customers, drew the ire of some local restaurateurs who said owner of North Coast Grub Jakki Milo was deceiving their customers.

A spokesperson for DoorDash confirmed the delivery giant would launch this month in Astoria and Warrenton, along with Lincoln City, Newport and Coos Bay in the coming months. The company, launched by a group of college students in Palo Alto, California in 2013, was listed on the stock market in December with an initial valuation of \$39 billion. Second Measure, a consumer analytics firm, said DoorDash accounted for more than half of all U.S. meal delivery transactions at the time of its listing.

Yiu said she is concerned about the competition DoorDash will bring. But she and Dua started Slurpalicious in part because of complaints by restaurateurs over the higher commission prices charged

by companies like DoorDash, Grubhub and Uber Eats. Slurpalicious started out charging restaurants no more than \$50 a month in commissions and has since waived all but a one-time activation fee.

Peninsula left out

While the North Coast has attracted interest from multiple delivery companies, the Long Beach Peninsula has remained a relative dead zone for delivery.

Kevin Kline, a Long Beach city councilor, maintenance technician at McDonald's and driver for AC Checker Taxi, said he is the only person based on the peninsula delivering people or food.

“We’re able to make it work, but it’s definitely tough,” he said.

Kline said there were some days in the summer when he was able to make money doing deliveries, but that he usually only makes between one and three a day to mostly repeat customers. The issue is getting restaurants on board, marketing the service and getting customers to pay enough to cover the

cost of delivery, he said.

“It’s never going to be Astoria or a larger market, but I think that under the right circumstances — if COVID wasn’t happening, if all the bars were open full time, if we were having our typical summers — it would be tons better.

“I think it’d be really difficult to support ... more than just a couple drivers, but I don’t know,” Kline said. “As I mentioned, I have to work several jobs and my wife works two. So that helps, but it’s definitely tough.”

Yiu, who has about 20 people approved as drivers on the North Coast, said she has spoken to eateries on the peninsula. But she worries about being able to ensure good customer service in far-flung locales.

“We’re trying to do it slowly, so we don’t make too many mistakes,” Yiu said.

Refining their delivery model is doubly important for Yiu and Dua, who plan around the end of the year to expand Slurpalicious into Portland and compete directly with delivery giants like DoorDash, Uber Eats and Grubhub.

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