

## GORGE LOCAL – IN BUSINESS

## Sustainability a focus of Henni's Kitchen and Bar



At left, Henni's co-owners Christiaan Erasmus and Sarah Morton-Erasmus pose in front of the restaurant. Right, Christiaan displays new tableware: a local handcrafted cutting board from Dave Swan.

## White Salmon couple seeks to renew the spirit of Henni's Kitchen and Bar

■ By Jacob Bertram  
Columbia Gorge News

"Not often does a restaurant have a chance after 10 years to reinvent itself."

Such were the words of Sarah Morton-Erasmus, co-owner of Henni's Kitchen and Bar. In late April, the restaurant, located at 120 E Jewett Boulevard downtown White Salmon, will be back open for business following months of uncertainty. This time, Sarah and her husband Christiaan have made the decision to revamp the menu and the flow of the restaurant to accommodate a slower, more purposeful dining experience.

"We want to be more like a bistro," Sarah said, with a focus on serving "excellent quality food on each plate."

The restaurant, Sarah said, "won't be so server-heavy" and will discard the idea of a turn-and-burn dining experience, instead opting to strive for a perfect experience for patrons.

In preparation of the upcoming opening, Sarah and Christiaan have been hard at work over the past couple of months experimenting with dishes, deep-cleaning the kitchen and dining room, and, with the help of relatives, installing a wall to separate customers of Sarah and Christiaan's pizza take-out spot "Pizza Leona" from patrons of Henni's.

Pizza Leona, opened last year by Sarah and Christiaan in an effort to offset the loss of business due to the shuttering of indoor dining due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will stay open alongside Henni's, the couple told *Columbia Gorge News*.

"Pizza Leona kept the lights on," Christiaan said, and noted that selling to-go "Chef's boxes" out of Henni's through the pandemic "really kept up our morale."

"We were insanely lucky," Sarah said. Around this time last year "we were looking around at what other jobs to do. We were in such limbo."

To their great relief, the property manager and the "restaurant's godfather", Mark Watterson, has been beyond supportive of their efforts to hit the ground running. With some shuffling around last year, Watterson gave Sarah and Christiaan the opportunity to move their pizza ovens to open up Pizza Leone.

Watterson also invested in an expanded outdoor dining area for Henni's, by hiring an architect and contractors to construct a canopy and purchasing outdoor amenities.

The outdoor dining room will add 24 seats, as well as gas heaters and sky lights to the restaurant.

"It makes a big difference when someone is invested in your success," Sarah said.

While the international flavors will continue to premiere on the menu, much as they have over the 11 years the couple has owned Henni's, they are seeking healthy, sustainable, and hearty meals.

"Right now the whole thing is sustainable," Christiaan said. "We want to be more conscientious about where we are sourcing out next dish, and our fish."

Christiaan said their daughter announcing her intention to explore a vegan lifestyle inspired portions of Henni's menu.

"Don't get me wrong, I still



love a grilled lamb chop," said Christiaan. The couple invested in a new charcoal grill, because, in Christiaan's words, "the main thing we want to do is piri-piri chicken."

The restaurant will continue to provide a craft cocktail program, Sarah said.

As the restaurant's improvements kick up the pace and things start picking up for reopening, Sarah and Christiaan said they expect Henni's to be open four days a week at the beginning. While they continue to man the counters at Pizza Leona and Arrowleaf, an artist collective located down the street which Sarah helps

maintain, the couple are looking for extra hands to help out. Henni's is looking to hire a bartender, and a prep cook. The couple is also seeking a part-time worker, perhaps a high-schooler, to

man the counters of Pizza Leona.

Over the past month, the fact that the restaurant is about to open again has really set in for Sarah and Christiaan.

"We've been all giddy," Sarah said. "I feel a sense of freedom for sure. It's a little bit like 'oh boy. Here we go.'"

GRANTS  
Housing costs 'unfathomable'

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general search for a property to rent in Klickitat County yielded just two options: A one bedroom for \$1,400 per month and another one bedroom for \$2,200 per month. Skamania County fared about the same and yielded two hits, one for a studio apartment for \$1,200 per month and one for a three bedroom home for \$2,500 per month.

Let's put this in perspective. To be classified as affordable housing, to rent the least expensive 595 square foot apartment at \$1,200 per month, a person would need to have a monthly income of \$4,000 or \$48,000 annually. For the \$2,500 per month three bedroom, a household would need to make \$8,333 per month or \$100,000 per year. For many people, these numbers are unfathomable.

So, what can we do? We can use the Community Needs Assessment to develop strategic planning. We can focus on nurturing local partnerships and find ways to help people be self-sufficient. We can encourage local governments and agencies to create new opportunities, such as affordable housing developments for our low-income population. We can get active with our local, state and federal representatives to find real solutions. We can find solutions we're passionate about and learn how to advocate for our communities.

Most of all, we can have empathy for our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet. We can show them compassion. Although the problems of the present echo the problems of the past, it is essential to support them on their journey and keep their families safe and secure.

We can't give up. These are our communities and our

neighbors. What affects one person affects us all. I think back on my childhood and how my parents struggled to make ends meet after my dad lost his job in the logging industry. Thanks to the kindness of this agency I now helm, my family was able to make ends meet and get back on our feet. For me, it's personal, and it is for you as well. Think of your community and the people you see every day. Many of them are struggling. Working together we can make a difference for them, for us, and for future generations.

I encourage you to get involved. Whether it is WAGAP, another local agency, your city, county or state government — be a part of the solution. Find the complete 2020 Community Needs Assessment pdf online at [bit.ly/2PEDocj](http://bit.ly/2PEDocj). The link is also on our website at [www.wagap.org/what-we-do](http://www.wagap.org/what-we-do). For more information, email [info@wagap.org](mailto:info@wagap.org).

## Friends appeal logging decisions

Friends of the Columbia Gorge recently appealed decisions by the U.S. Forest Service and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) that allow the logging of one-million board feet of timber (roughly equivalent to 250 logging trucks) within one of the most highly protected areas in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

The Forest Service and WDNR decisions both approve a commercial logging project proposed by Synergy Resources LLC within a Gorge Special Management Area near Major Creek in

Klickitat County. Friends appealed the Forest Service decision in federal court on Feb. 12 and appealed the WDNR decision to the Washington Pollution Control Hearings Board on March 3.

"In the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, there are six basic land use designations which are administered more forcefully in the Special Management Areas due to the high incidence of scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources," said a press release. "Special Management Area Open Space is the most restrictive of all the Scenic

Area's land use designations and is vital to protecting key areas of the Gorge with sensitive resources. Commercial logging is prohibited on lands designated as Open Space."

Among key species impacted could be western gray squirrel habitat, currently listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need under the Washington State Wildlife Action Plan and a Priority Species under the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Priority Habitat and Species Program.



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