

A Delicious Agenda

Intaba's whips up tasty blend of fabulous food and worldly awareness.

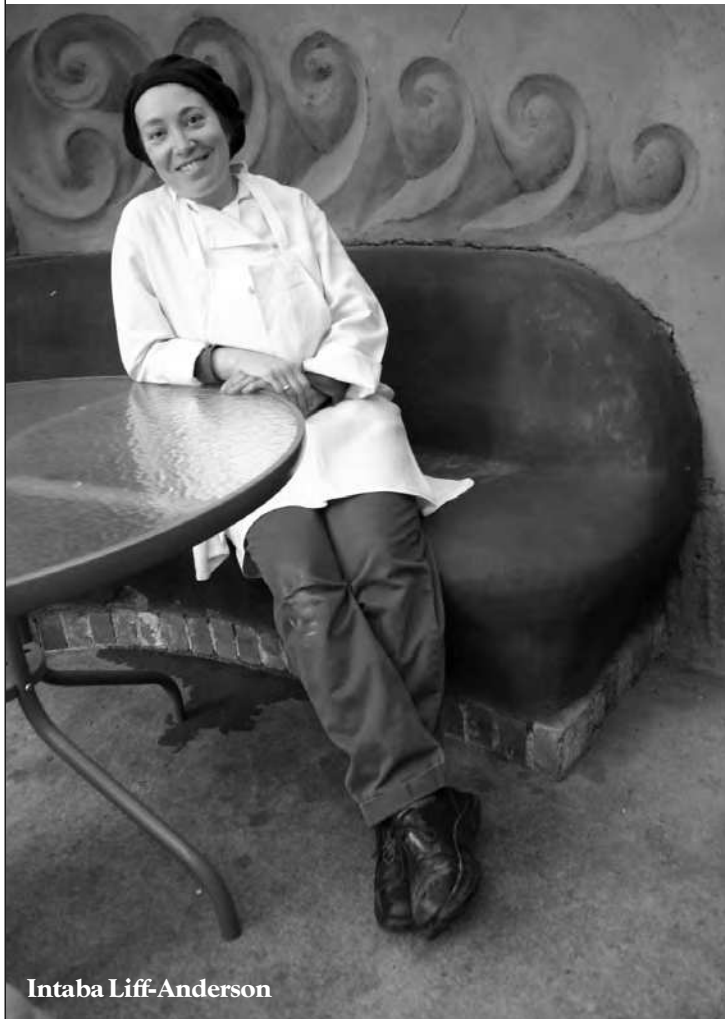
STORY BY MELISSA BEARNS · PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

Stroll past the wood-fired earthen oven that made it into the pages of *The New York Times*. Pass beneath the lush plants cascading down around tables on the outside patio. Pause by the bubbling fountain and listen to the crinkle of bamboo as it moves in the wind. Then wander on into Intaba's. Take a seat and relax.

It will be three years this April since Intaba and Ocean Liff-Anderson opened the 95 percent organic restaurant with the mission to empower local agriculture and serve as a model of sustainability, with green building and business practices.

Originally, they served all-vegan food but Intaba, the restaurant's namesake, said that in response to customer demand, they slowly added more meat to the menu, incorporating organic beef, lamb, chicken and seafood.

Warm wood floors, a crackling fire and cozy little nooks create a comfortable, intimate feel, perfect for a semi-private meal or a romantic dinner. Bright batiks in royal purple, whites and splashes of teal green and indigo grace the tables. Prints by artist Bonnie Hall of deep blue delphiniums, purple violets with vibrant green stems and leaves and butterflies decorate the walls that are painted with a wash of pink, yellow and orange.



Intaba Liff-Anderson

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Healthy plants add a living energy to the multi-roomed space and a spiraling decorative column made of a wood-textured cement-like material complements the earthy feel of the main room.

Service is a priority. Cheery waitstaff make pleasant small talk, surreptitiously keep water glasses full and deliver the delicious meals while they're still piping hot. The menu includes a wide range of lunch and dinner options, from wraps with succulent lamb to dinner entrées such as ginger-infused wild Chinook salmon served with a balsamic pomegranate reduction and homemade vegi tamales with a plum molé sauce.

Northwest wines that perfectly pair with each entrée are listed, but vino enthusiasts can choose from an excellent selection of some of the regions finest. A few classic Italian and German options are thrown in as well. If beer is more your style, you can't go wrong with the Hawks and Eel River organic ales, including seasonals and delicious staples such as oatmeal stout and IPAs.

We sampled the soup of the day, roasted vegetable barley, a thick, hearty stew with a rich broth and a hint of garlic. The sticky brown rice came drizzled with a pungent sauce of puréed roasted red peppers and almonds, and the crab cakes were as good as any I've eaten while living in Baltimore — light and flavorful, served with a mango, tomato, kiwi salsa that accented the subtle flavor of the crab.

The Thai curry wrap, served in a whole wheat tortilla, was sweet with a delicate balance between the mellow spice of the curry and a somewhat sweet marinade. More sticky rice, crunchy carrots, onions and cucumber added texture, crunch and flavor. The pickled beets served on the side were excellent as well, not too sweet, not too tart; and the high-quality of the fresh, local produce came through in every bite.

In addition to a varied and flavorful menu, the Liff-Andersons use the space to bring multicultural events to Corvallis, including a recent show in October by La Vida Nueva, a women's weaving cooperative based in Oaxaca, Mexico.

"Having the restaurant has given us a forum to reach more people," Intaba said. "It's a place to show people different ways to live a good life, a life with beauty and culture. And really good food." ★



Crab cakes and roasted vegetable barley soup



Thai curry wrap

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