

GRIT IS ELEGANT IN THE WHIT

FARM-TO-TABLE CHEF FOCUSES ON STAYING LOCAL

BY KEVIN PIASKOWSKI AND LAETITIA BÉRAUD • PHOTO TODD COOPER



ASHLEY HAWKINS

There's a new kid on the block in Whiteaker's culinary community. Grit is dignified but rough around the edges. And in keeping with Eugene's passion for the slow food movement, Grit will offer an entirely farm-to-table menu that will change weekly if not nightly.

Every night, around the corner from Izakaya Meiji, Grit will offer a four-course dinner for \$35. Drinks are extra, and owner Ashley Hawkins intends to offer a wide range of local wines. The menu will also feature 12 additional items ranging from \$6-\$20 including seasonal salads, a selection of cheeses from local producers and house-made charcuterie. One of Hawkins' favorites is chicken liver confit. The menu will also feature vegetarian and vegan options.

Hawkins is dedicated to good food ethics. "Acknowledging that fewer options can be better, we can eat locally, deliciously and seasonally," she says. Hawkins isn't just any other person looking to cash in on Eugene's booming culinary industry. She spent most of her life in the agriculture business. Her inspiration for cooking is a mishmash of all the places she's been. She grew up on a cattle ranch in Florida. She worked at Horton Road Organic Farm in Blachly for the past few years, where she improvised cooking with whatever the farm produced. It will be through this farm and the Lane County Farmers Market that she will funnel an ever-changing supply of fresh produce and concoct her recipes.

Grit will seat 42 inside and at least another 40 on the patio. The atmosphere is designed to be welcoming and the dishes will be local, organic and taste elegant, she says. As for the venue itself, Grit is the reincarnation of the historic Shamrock House building. Hawkins is working hard to rehabilitate and preserve the landmark. She says that the site will meet full restoration requirements and feature reclaimed wood panels, tables and bar top.

Hawkins has poured an enormous amount of heart and love into reviving the building. Everyone involved in the building and its restoration is a good friend. And the community itself, including neighboring Ninkasi, Meiji and occasional pedestrians, has been supportive of her efforts, she says, making Grit a seamless addition to Whiteaker's cultural renaissance. ■

Grit will open to the public on Friday, Sept. 13, at 1080 W. 3rd. Ave. Hours are 4 to 10 pm Tuesday through Thursday and 4 to 11 pm Friday and Saturday.

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