

BEST CATERING

Baked Alaska

Astoria, Oregon

Runner-up: Bridgewater Bistro, Astoria

Honorable Mention: Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro

By JON BRODERICK

When they stumbled upon Astoria in the spring of 2000, Chris and Jennifer Holen were newly wed, en route from Arizona to Alaska to run an itinerant catering service from their VW van and trailer, chasing music festivals between Homer and Fairbanks. That sunny day they found themselves atop the Astoria Column.

"Wow. This is amazing," they agreed. "Let's see what rent's like here."

Who knew that a year later their restaurant Baked Alaska would establish itself among the quintessential dining venues that distinguish Astoria?

The couple met in Denali National Park, where they were working for competing tour lines. On their first date, a bush plane flew them to a remote

wilderness lodge. The next day, their pilot dropped them off with their mountain bikes for a 20-mile journey home. The Holens grew accustomed to adventure and to seizing opportunity.

Scuttling down from the Column, they learned that the Astoria Café next to Gimre's Shoes was for sale. In 10 minutes they had a deal, and in the fall they opened a restaurant. A few months later, the eatery moved to Baked Alaska's current location on the water at the foot of 12th Street.

"We've just grown into this community. I didn't realize what an impact Astoria would have on us," says Jennifer. People often thank them for all they do, but, she says, "We couldn't be successful like this anywhere else."

From their early catering adventures behind that Volkswagen van, the Holens honed their skills

in Astoria, first at Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce After Hours events and then, while they owned the Schooner restaurant at the Hotel Elliott (another opportunity they seized), at Liberty Theater events.

Their "customer-first" catering philosophy is inspired by the terrific service a caterer provided for their wedding in Sedona, Arizona. "We had a very clear picture of what we wanted, and they were so accommodating," remembers Jennifer. "Our first question for our own customers now is 'How can we help you achieve your vision for the event?'"

Now, three or four times a week, the new Baked Alaska catering truck delivers happy culinary experiences to baby showers, graduation parties, weddings, anniversaries, memorial services, Chamber After Hours events, and Goonies anniversary reunions.

"Food brings people together," Jennifer says.

Baked Alaska offers custom catering services; find the restaurant's catering inquiry form online at www.bakedak.com or call 503-325-7414 for more information.



Photo by Jon Broderick

Baked Alaska owners, Chef Christopher Holen, left, and his wife, Jennifer Holen, stand with their daughter, Ana Holen, outside their restaurant on the Astoria riverfront.

BEST SERVER

Jean-Marc Bourgouin

42nd Street Cafe, Seaview, Washington

Runner-up: Teona Dawson, T. Paul's Supper Club, Astoria

Honorable Mention: Zackery O'Connor,

Fort George Brewery, Astoria

By JON BRODERICK

Nothing quite garnishes a fine dining experience like a charming waiter with a French accent. A diner hears accordion somewhere, suddenly craves a cigarette, and imagines that waiter's earlier life working in a Parisian brasserie. Jean-Marc Bourgouin, of Seaview's 42nd Street Cafe, though, isn't your typical French waiter.

He began his accomplished serving career in Alaska. During his earlier life he didn't wait tables at Les Deux Magots. He sorted mail in a French post office.

But in 1983, romance and adventure lured him to Anchorage, where he worked as a laborer, a bank courier, a Penny Saver circulation manager. Then he spent two years working the

Bering Sea on a factory trawler. Ultimately, he landed a job as barista at the Anchorage Museum Restaurant. In the summer he worked between Anchorage and Fairbanks as a server on the Alaska Railroad passenger train.

"My real training in 'haute cuisine' started when Van Hale hired me to work at the Marx Brothers Café, one of Anchorage's first fine dining restaurants," Jean-Marc explains in pleasantly accented English. "We had an incredible menu and wine list. He trained me. I really loved it."

At the Marx Brothers Café, he met his wife, Kathleen McCormack, a French-trained chef. It was on a wine tasting trip to the Willamette Valley 15 years ago that they stumbled upon Astoria. "We were just looking at houses,



Photo by Jon Broderick

Jean-Marc Bourgouin, a waiter at 42nd Street Cafe in Seaview, Washington, has won Best Server in the Coast Weekend Readers' Choice Awards every year since 2009.

and we found one that we liked, and we said, 'Shall we do it?' and we bought the house."

A year later, in 2003, they were back. Kathleen works now at Fort George and Jean-Marc drives — as he has for 12 years, he says — "those scenic 20 miles between Alderbrook and Seaview five days a week."

42nd Street Cafe & Bistro is located at 4201 Pacific Way in Seaview, Washington. For more information, call 360-642-2323 or visit 42ndstcafe.com

BEST THEATER

Columbian Theater

Astoria, Oregon

Runner-up: Liberty Theater, Astoria

Honorable Mention: Coaster Theatre, Cannon Beach

By JON BRODERICK

"My background was in theater costume design and construction. I don't pretend to be an expert in film, so don't try to stump me," says Columbian Theater owner Jeanine Fairchild.

She'll stump you, though, and you'll end up clicking through YouTube for trailers to favorite movies you ought to have seen by now, like "Down by Law," "Factory Girl" or "All About Eve." You thought "Caddyshack" was funny? Jeanine invites you to watch "Captain Ron."

Few towns enjoy a theater as

quirky and community-centered as the Columbian (where you can enjoy a movie at 7 p.m. any night for \$4 and get the kids in at half-price). Jeanine's favorite audience might be the school children who arrive at the end of each school year for a private showing of a kids' favorite film.

When the inevitable time arrived a year and a half ago to switch the theater from 35 mm film to otherwise prohibitively expensive digital projection, the theater's Kickstarter campaign raised nearly \$60,000 and, so, the Columbian will continue showing movies and hosting Ratfish Wrangler concerts, Blind Pilot CD release



Photo by Jon Broderick

In 2013, the Astoria's Columbian Theater replaced its old 35 mm film projector, in operation since at least 1979, with a new digital projector and sound system after raising more than \$60,000 through independent fundraising site Kickstarter, benefit events and concerts, and donations.

parties, "Dragalution!" galas and FisherPoet gatherings.

The Columbian Theater is located at 1114 Marine Drive. Movies show at 7 p.m. nightly; general admission is \$4 and children 12 and under are admitted at \$2.