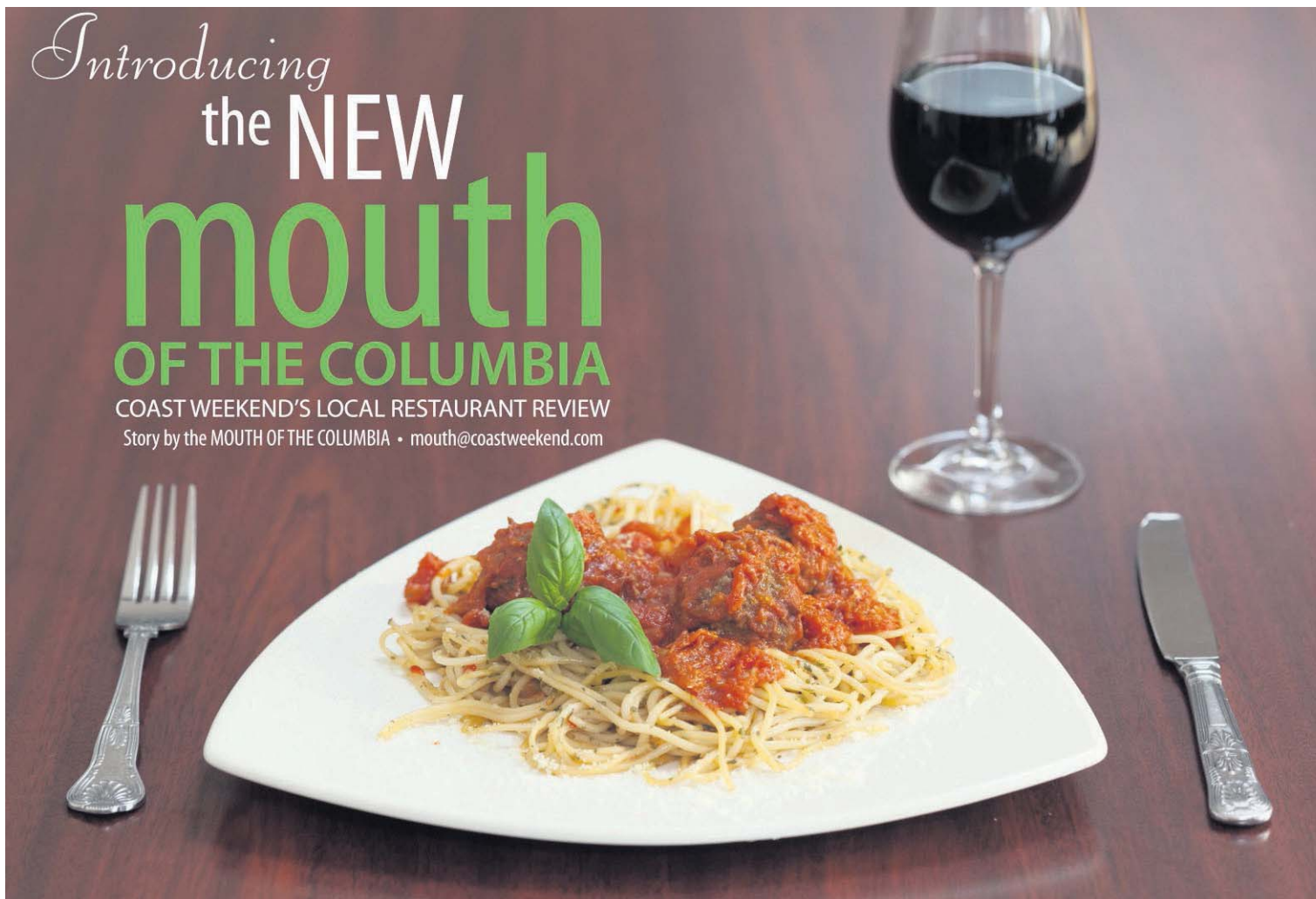


Introducing the NEW mouth OF THE COLUMBIA

COAST WEEKEND'S LOCAL RESTAURANT REVIEW

Story by the MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA • mouth@coastweekend.com



Submitted photo

"He who distinguishes the true savor of his food can never be a glutton; he who does not cannot be otherwise."

— Henry David Thoreau

I grew up in a house of meat and potatoes, the product of unadventurous eaters. As a child I was insufferably picky. I remember, on countless occasions, kicking and screaming at the table, locked in wars of will with my mother over whether or not I would eat my peas. Sometimes they lasted hours, and generally, I lost.

Upon leaving the nest, my tastes began to broaden. I fell in love with sushi and began scouring the cases of Greek delis. After trying "tikka masala" I yearned for it, then learned to make curries from scratch. I am delighted by not only the nourishing rainbow of Ethiopian "wat" but the social, communal nature of "injera."

My taste and experience embraces high and low. I've spent nights in the finest steak houses and, for weeks on end, been too broke to buy a street taco. As such, I'm acutely aware of value.

I'm an omnivore. I eat everything except cilantro. (I'm one of the genetically predisposed who find it tastes more akin to soap).

I'll try anything, except maybe "balut" (a

boiled egg containing a semi-formed duck embryo). Then again, catch me on the right day and I just might. I appreciate that food can be comforting as well as adventurous, and am inspired by writers like Anthony Bourdain and Jonathan Gold, who chose the path less traveled.

I don't have any rules, per se, but I aspire to always be improving — learning to eat better, both ethically and in regard to my own health.

As well as assessing taste, value and experience, I plan to produce a column that places food and restaurants within the greater context of the Columbia Pacific.

We live in a region of richness and abundance, where foragers comb the forest floor, farmers grow vegetables, ranchers raise livestock, and fisherman float the neighboring sea.

To that end, I hope to take this column beyond the table, to learn from the many producers in our midst. I seek

to explore from the farms to the docks, to the greenhouses and berry patches, from the smokehouses, butchers and canneries to the many burgeoning breweries and distilleries.

As well as how food tastes, what it costs and where it comes from, I want to explore how it makes us feel. This could take many forms, such as experimenting with different diets and keeping a diary of the results.

But I'm getting ahead of myself — the Mouth of the Columbia will remain primarily a source of restaurant reviews. To that end, I would be remiss not to talk a little about the ratings system.

First, let me make this plea: read. A

star rating is almost meaningless when detached from the written review. For instance, a place might have terrific food, but a terrible price, and perhaps you're happy to pay it. Or maybe a particular restaurant is worth visiting for one standout dish while the rest are simply middling.



Submitted photo

Chicken tikka masala is an Indian curry dish. The sauce includes tomatoes and a mix of spices.

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Wat, an Ethiopian stew or curry, is traditionally eaten with injera, a spongy flatbread usually made with teff flour. A diner often eats this dish as part of a group who share a communal bowl and basket of injera.

There are just too many multitudes of taste, experience and value that stars cannot encompass.

I must also add: five-star reviews will be very rare. I intend to save them for the absolute cream of the crop. A three-star review will generally be a place worth returning to. On the low end, unlike my predecessor, I will indeed publish one-and-two-star reviews. I feel, as a service to readers, it's my duty.

I would also very much like to invite you to this conversation. Write me at mouth@dailystorian.com. Tell me what you like, what you don't, what you appreciate, and where I've gone wrong. Also, tell me where I should go, and what I should try. If you're opening a new restaurant, tell me that too, as well as if you're creating a seasonal menu, or trying something new.

On my end, I vow to be honest, fair and act, above all, in service to local readers. I'll do my best to minimize mistakes, but I come to you today with hat in hand: I know I still have so much yet to learn — which is exactly what makes embarking on this new adventure so exciting. I hope you'll come along.

Humbly yours,
The Mouth