

Seasons

Cafe

A humble, hidden delight in downtown Cannon Beach

All too easily one could stroll through downtown Cannon Beach without noticing Seasons Cafe. Even right out front, Seasons doesn't necessarily shout its existence. (It's tucked away, off the main drag, behind Coastal Yarns and across from the Cannon Beach Distillery.) The service and atmosphere, too, are humble and rather nonchalant. It's only once the food is served that Seasons speaks up.

The cafe mostly does lunch, and the bright, airy, high-ceilinged, pastel-colored space is befitting of daytime dining. The lunch menu is dominated by a vast array of sandwiches, both hot and cold, along with wraps, a few salads, soups and other odds-and-ends. From the Aussie Dip (a lamb au jus) to the Traditional Reuben to the Albacore Tuna & Dill Havarti there are 25 to choose from. The gawky, goofily-endearing staff pointed me toward the hot Antipasto sandwich (\$10), which they said is among the most popular.

It was easy to see why — even before I took a bite. Served open-faced, the presentation was stunning, akin to a dense, unkempt forest underbrush. Sticks of Parmesan dripped in balsamic reduction against boldly green basil and thin strips of ham over tomatoes, salami and olive tapenade on a baguette. It was every bit as enticing as it was wild. A delightfully messy dance ensued with every finger-licking bite. Each contained so many sensations — salty olives, savory meats, bittersweet vinegar, fresh veggies, gooey cheese and crisp crust. The Antipasto truly contained multitudes. And there were two of them, each tall, and about five inches long, overflowing with the many components. I can't recommend it enough. It's excellent.

I also tried the Lamb Wrap (\$11), which too was marvelous, but nonetheless falls in the Antipasto's long shadow. Served cold and packed into a thin, orange tortilla, the thickly sliced chunks of lamb were tender, lean and ample. Alongside tomatoes and onions the mixed greens were fresh. Cucumbers and a minted yogurt aioli whispered Mediterranean influence. And while it wasn't on the menu, I detected flecks of a bold spicy mustard, which I would've welcomed more of. Like the Antipasto, the Lamb Wrap was a good size — akin to a chubby burrito.

At their base prices, the wraps and sandwiches come with a bag of chips, pasta salad or potato salad. I'll never, ever want a bag of chips when I eat out, so I opted first for the potato salad. It was creamy with plenty of briny kick. The potatoes were more whipped than whole; while celery provided a crisp crunch. Indeed, the potato was a fine addition for anyone wanting to make sure they get absolutely full. But sometimes you want the opposite of heavy starch, and I was disappointed to find that salad or soup constituted a \$4 up-charge. That's a bummer deal for side-salad.

The opposite was true of dinner. Whereas Seasons carries a bit of the inflated "Cannon Beach price" at lunch, dinner was a comparative bargain. Part of that sliding value proposition, I imagine, is about operation. Seasons doesn't do a whole lot of dinner (it's available on weekends only) and when the restaurant



Served cold, the Lamb Wrap packs thick slices of lamb, tomatoes, onions, mixed greens, cucumbers and minted yogurt aioli into a tortilla.

The Mouth found the Grilled Halibut to be rather bland and preferred the pasta entrees offered during dinner.

does it, staff retain a similar relaxed service vibe as they do in the afternoon. To be sure: This isn't a dig — I found Seasons' servers charming. But they are not slick, polished experts. Still, the intentions are good and the effort is there, and that's what matters most.

Unlike lunch, the dinner menu is mercifully brief. It centers around pastas and proteins. And unlike a lot of restaurants that offer pastas as a safer, often staid alternative, these pastas are preeminent.

The Spinach & Cheese Ravioli (\$18) featured a staggering tower of crab — perhaps a quarter-pound of it. Between two chutes of bread, the dish rose up like a skyline. The white wine tomato cream sauce was abundant



and rich, swimming with Parmesan, onions and mushrooms. Sopping it up with the bread was a joy. The raviolis themselves were round, large and sinfully creamy.

The Squid Ink Linguine with Steam Clams (\$17) was a delightful and refreshing left turn, not only for the black, lightly fishy squid ink pasta, but the yellow curry broth. That twang of curry is a flavor not found often enough on the North Coast. Along for the ride were plenty of clams, and again, the broth was well worth mopping up. The dish is nothing if not a successful experiment.

From the protein entrées I tried Grilled Halibut (\$21), which again was a pretty reasonable price for a good-sized filet. Very lightly seasoned with lemon and thyme, the fish itself was rather dull. But that's the nature of halibut; it's hardly overwhelming. The accompanying wild rice medley was also bland, and only worth eating when mixed with the ratatouille or the fish.

I much preferred the pastas. They're the dishes worth seeking out at dinner. Along with that Antipasto sandwich at lunch. I mean, my goodness... Don't pass it — or Seasons — by.

mouth

OF THE COLUMBIA

COAST WEEKEND'S LOCAL RESTAURANT REVIEW

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

Seasons Cafe

Rating: ★★★★★

255 N. Hemlock St., Cannon Beach

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HOURS: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

PRICE: \$\$ — Lunch entrées hover around \$10. Dinner's a great value around \$15 to \$20

SERVICE: Gawky, earnest and casual

VEGETARIAN / VEGAN OPTIONS: Vegetarians should be in good hands

DRINKS: Coffee, tea, espresso, beer and wine

KEY TO RATINGS

- ★ poor
- ★★ below average
- ★★★ good & worth returning
- ★★★★ excellent
- ★★★★★ outstanding, the best in the Columbia-Pacific region