

Skipanon: Seafood to buy, eat, give with confidence

Any person in business will sympathize with Skipanon Brand Seafood, which was caught up in the nightmarish scenario of having to recall thousands of dollars' worth of product this fall.

This Warrenton business owned by the Kujala family is the result of generations of work. It is justifiably lauded for safe and delicious canned seafood, which it both markets under its own brand and wholesales to other retailers in the region. It has been honored in the annual CEDR Awards, but the ultimate accolade comes from consumers who enjoy Skipanon products and often buy them to send as presents — perfect local Pacific Northwest food to give to out-of-town family and friends.

It came as a shock to the Kujalas and all of us when a Food and Drug Administration inspection

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kicked off a recall in early October. Based on a lack of documentation that all cans had been appropriately processed, the recall was a precaution to avoid any possibility that the products might harbor botulism bacteria. A contaminant more associated with home canning, rooting botulism out of the nation's food supply was among the FDA's first institutional missions more than a century ago.

Back in the era of President Theodore Roosevelt, impure foods were a national scandal. Search

through records of the 20th century's early decades and you will find many familiar Lower Columbia and Willapa Bay companies mentioned in enforcement actions. Painful as FDA scrutiny is, its efforts have largely banished the most serious problems that used to crop up. This included everything from deadly bacteria to under-filled cans. No one wants those problems to crop again. Continuing vigilance is warranted.

When it comes to Skipanon products, no illnesses were ever reported. As our story in this issue describes, issues surrounding documentation, record-keeping and employee training have all been addressed. We can buy Skipanon foods with confidence. We should do so — mostly because they are delicious and safe, but also as a vote of confidence in a hard-working local family.

COMPANY IS JUST ONE GOOD

EXAMPLE OF WARRENTON'S

UPWARD MOMENTUM.

Mark Kujala is mayor of Warrenton and an embodiment of the true grit that makes Warrenton so special. The city and its residents quietly succeed. Again hearkening back to history, maps from a century ago show Warrenton's aspiration to become a major commercial gateway to the Columbia River. Although ocean-going ships still aren't homeported there, in the early 21st century the city is amply successful as a retail and industrial hub, with one of the most diverse economies on the Oregon coast.

Gateway to Oregon's most pop-

ular seashore park, Fort Stevens, Warrenton is also famous as a destination-shopping locale, attracting customers from a 50-mile radius. In our November issue, we covered the latest honors for GB Jewelers, whose Warrenton store is an amazing showplace and a prime illustration of Warrenton's ability to achieve its aspirations. There are many other success stories on every major street of this surprising community — a small blue-collar city that dreams big.

Join me in enjoying Skipanon Brand Seafood this holiday season.

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