

# The Mouth wants to hear from you

Local food is heading into exciting territory, and the next year holds plenty of adventure

Last week I highlighted some of the top restaurants I reviewed in 2015. As five of those six opened in the last two years, I concluded that dining in the region is on the rise.

But you don't have to take my word for it.

At the Iron Chef Goes Coastal event in November I was afforded the opportunity to chat for a moment with judge Vitaly Paley, who is known as one of the forefathers of Portland's restaurant revolution. I wanted to know what the renowned restaurateur saw happening with food on the North Coast.

"I think, by extension, Portland is growing, and all the surrounding communities take cues and work well off one another," Paley said. "(You) have amazing product here to work with, all the seafood. We're right smack in the middle of some of the best growing area. And this has been the most amazing growing season, to begin with.

"Portland is just a bigger city with a lot more people and a lot more restaurants," Paley continued. "It takes the ante up. We all compete against each other, but it's a friendly competition. But the ambition is high and I think it rubs off on all the surrounding communities."

I couldn't agree more.

And, as I see it, the boiling food and economic climates in Portland — and other nearby metropolitan areas, like Seattle — will continue to buoy our local Columbia-Pacific scene. As a growing food destination, more and more chefs are getting both advanced and eclectic training in Portland. And as the cost of living there continues to grow, and the competition becomes more intense, the coast becomes a more attractive place to both live and start a business. Astoria's Street 14 Cafe and Frite & Scoop are excellent examples of such migration.

But chefs aren't the only entrepreneurs finding value in the North Coast. First-gen-

eration farms, farmers and ranchers — like 46 North, R-evolution Gardens and Skamakowa Creamery — are producing excellent foods that in turn provide inspiration and opportunity to local chefs.

So yes, I — like Paley — am excited about where local food is heading. But enough about me.

I want to know about you.

I want to know your favorite restaurants, and I want to know your favorite dishes. I want to know where you've been surprised, impressed, let down, and where you can always count on.

Also, what kind of cuisine would you most like to see on the coast? What kind of food are you sick of? What always ends up on your plate and never gets eaten? What's underrated? What's overrated?

I also want to know what you think about this column. What's most helpful?

## Contact The Mouth

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Submitted image

Where have I gone wrong? Where do I need to go? What do I need to try? What restaurant deserves a second look? (This includes reviews by past Mouths.)

Also, are you interested in columns that focus on food at large, such as the Food and Drug Administration's recent approval of genetically modified salmon as fit for human consumption? Would a profile of a farm or farmer be interesting?

Furthermore, are there any vegetarians/vegans out there reading? I'd love to hear your thoughts. I don't want to leave you out. What are your favorite spots? Who does the best job not only meeting your

needs, but exceeding them?

To these questions, I invite you to email me: [mouth@coastweekend.com](mailto:mouth@coastweekend.com). But even that begs another question: Are there better ways to engage than email? While I absolutely welcome story comments on [coastweekend.com](http://coastweekend.com), I try to respond personally to every email — even the persnickety ones.

Also, are you able to easily find archived columns? And while we run a specific Coast Dining Facebook page, would any other services or apps — like Twitter, Instagram, etc. — be helpful, or more conducive to continuing the conversation?

Now, we'll get back to our regularly scheduled review programming next week. But before we do, I want to leave you with one final thought.

Taking over as The Mouth has been a marvelous, eye-opening experience. I'm learning so much every day — not only about restaurants on the North Coast, but about the nature of food, cooking, dining and eating. As when I began, I remain humble, hat in hand, knowing only that I have so much more to learn.

I suppose that's one of the things about food that's so great — as both an art and a science, one can never know it all, nor exhaust its potentials for creativity. It's the kind of subject capable of fueling a lifelong practice and passion. And for the opportunity to further explore this world, I remain your grateful servant.

So, now, tell me about you.

# mouth

## OF THE COLUMBIA

COAST WEEKEND'S LOCAL RESTAURANT REVIEW

Story by THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA • [mouth@coastweekend.com](mailto:mouth@coastweekend.com)