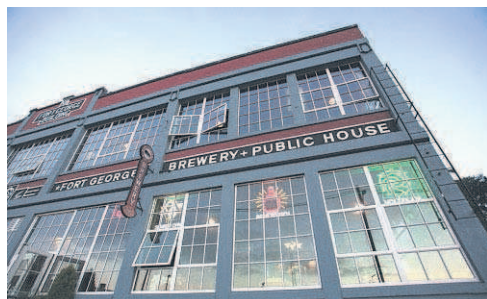




Submitted photo  
Fort George's current lineup of canned regular beers is, from left, the 1811 Lager, Vortex IPA, Cavatica Stout, Big Guns and The Optimist.



Submitted photo  
The race for Best Brewpub was very close. Fort George Brewery and Buoy Beer Co. competed neck-and-neck, with the Fort sealing its win by just five votes.



Photo by Alex Pajunas  
Luke Barrett, a brewer at Fort George Brewery, cleans and fills kegs inside the Lovell Building.



Photo by Dwight Caswell  
Fort George Brewery crafts regular, seasonal and creative occasional beers. Pictured are the seasonal Fresh IPA, left, and the Squash Buckler.

BEST BAR, BEST BREWPUB, BEST PIZZA & BEST SERVER

# FORT GEORGE

## BREWERY + PUBLIC HOUSE

Astoria, Oregon

By RYAN HUME

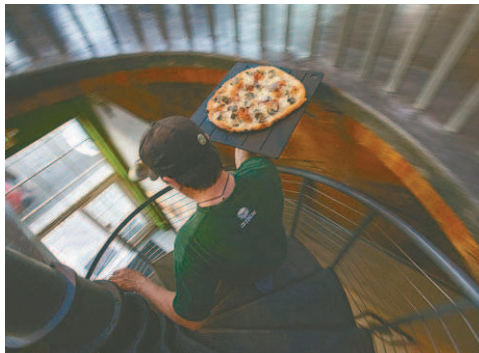
Readers sampled all of the suds around and once again chose Fort George to reign supreme in the Best Brewpub category. Having shored up the majority of the 1400 block of Duane Street in Astoria since first opening in 2007, the Fort is more like a multi-tiered brew park than a simple brewpub.

Big doesn't necessarily mean bad. The Fort offers patrons plenty of different experiences depending on what they are in the mood for. Hidden deep inside the brewery, the Lovell Taproom is the place for a simple slice of pizza and a Quick Wit by the fireplace. The main floor of the public house is perfect for pulling on a pint of Cavatica Stout during a family dinner in a tall, slotted wood booth. Live music might be happening upstairs or over at the Lovell Showroom.

Ranked in 2014 as the 13th largest brewery in Oregon, Fort George moved 13,800 barrels of lupulin-laden beer in 2015 alone. But along with their expansion and new ventures, owners Chris Nemlowill and Jack Harris and crew haven't forgotten the importance of good service, community involvement and a comfortable atmosphere — facts that seem to sit well with Readers' Choice voters.

Look forward to Stout Month and the ever-popular Festival of Dark Arts in February 2016 with more canned

seasonals and special brews on tap. Your Sunday nights stay lively with live music each week (free and open to all ages) at 8 p.m. The Fort will continue with the Lovell Showroom's Thursday night lecture series that rotates between Ales & Ideas, Beers to Your Health, Nature Matters and Wit & Wisdom (recent talks have covered everything from the



File photo  
Fort George bakes its pizzas in a wood-fired oven located on the second floor; the oven's oval mouth remains open, so you can peek inside. The pizzas are made with organic flour sourced in the Pacific Northwest, and toppings include house-made sausage, pulled pork, Mediterranean flavors, truffle cheeses and more.

potential Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake to yoga philosophy and climate change), while a new season of Brewer's Dinners is just around the corner. Plus, beginning Jan. 26, the Fort will host a benefit night for local nonprofits every last Tuesday of the month. The first was a fundraiser for the Lewis & Clark Parents Club to kick up a little cash for a playground. Of course, as always, there will be beer, too.

### Best Pizza

The Fort can now boast about having the best pizza in town. Pizza thrives under volcanic conditions, and nothing accomplishes this better than a wood-fired oven. Whether it is topped in simple pepperoni or rarified in truffle cheese, a pizza crust charred on the outside, fluffy in the center and molten with dairy is a beautiful thing. At Fort George, the only question remaining is which is



Photo by Ryan Hume

Zack O'Connor, who works at Fort George Brewery, was voted Best Server in the 2015 Readers' Choice Awards.

the accompaniment and which is the main course: the beer or the pizza?

### Best Server: Zack O'Connor

After having lived in Portland for a mere six months following college, it only took one trip to the North Coast for Zack O'Connor to fall in love with Astoria. "I'm not a very impetuous person," O'Connor noted, but after that first visit he immediately put in his two weeks' notice and landed in Astoria in January 2011.

Starting at Fort George in May 2012, it didn't take long for readers to notice O'Connor's commitment, expertise and easy-going nature when it comes to his job, and voters have tipped their caps to him with the 2015 Best Server award in thanks.

O'Connor has one simple goal in mind when it comes to customer service: He wants to find you the right beer. Besides that, "it's really about anticipating what they need before they realize they need it," he said. O'Connor credits the company, culture and collaborative outlook of Fort George for making his job what it is.

Personally, O'Connor tends to favor Session IPAs, like the Fort seasonal Big Guns. A "session" beer is a British term that refers to a beer with a low-alcohol content, often defined as under 5 percent, as in you can drink a few in a single drinking session and still get off your stool.

When he's not slinging microbrews, O'Connor is probably best known as the bass player of the Astoria-based indie group Holiday Friends.

Having recently transitioned into an expanded human resources role at the Fort, O'Connor has no plans to leave the floor soon. "Meeting people and talking about craft beer is the best part of working at the brewery," he said.

Fort George Brewery is located at 1483 Duane St. Check out [www.fortgeorgebrewery.com](http://www.fortgeorgebrewery.com) for more information.

BEST BURGER, BEST CLAM CHOWDER, BEST FINE DINING & BEST CHEF

# The Depot

Seaview, Washington

By RYAN HUME

Packed inside a small historic train station, just across the way from the Sou'Wester Lodge in Seaview, Washington, on 38th and L places, Michael Lalewicz and Nancy Gorshe's the Depot Restaurant continues to be the little engine that could, does and keeps on delighting North Coast diners in a variety of categories. A perennial favorite of the Readers' Choice Awards, the Depot is back again this year with four more wins, including a second go as Best Chef, a category first introduced in 2014 that Lalewicz has now taken both years running. Let's meet the chef.

### Best Chef

Lalewicz — a Detroit native and classically trained chef — opened the Depot 13 years ago with Gorshe, his wife and business partner. Knowing that he did not want to do exactly what everyone else was doing, Lalewicz recalls the Depot's eclectic menu as a nod to the building's past when it served as a stop on the "Clamshell Railroad," which operated at the whim of the tides. Describing their atmosphere as "casual fine dining," there's no dress code at the Depot, which makes sense when you are only a few hundred feet away from the beach. This comes as you are approach has won over locals and tourists alike. But, of course, it is the food that gets the most notice, and Lalewicz and Gorshe have been featured on local Portland and Seattle TV stations as well as nominated for Best Chef by ABC's Nightline. Lalewicz will kick off this year's wine dinner season on March 4 with a five-course meal hon-

some of those flavors may seem, rest assured that the Depot has put in every effort to source local ingredients. "We are honored to be a part of a national campaign starting soon called Eat This Fish that is celebrating sustainable fisheries throughout the country," Gorshe added. "We are featuring our local ling cod and rockfish with local fishermen in national advertisements."

### Best Fine Dining

Whether for a date night, special celebration or just a memorable meal, Readers' Choice voters have consistently chosen the Depot Restaurant as their favorite place to wine and dine. With a nod to '50s-era décor in the black-and-white checkered floor and amid the theatrics and flare-ups of an open kitchen, the Depot manages to snugly fit plenty of attentive service into a softly lit, but small space. Local ephemera hangs on the walls, and there's even a mural of a loco-

mativ, a nod to the building's past when it served as a stop on the "Clamshell Railroad," which operated at the whim of the tides.

Describing their atmosphere as "casual fine dining," there's no dress code at the Depot, which makes sense when you are only a few hundred feet away from the beach. This comes as you are approach has won over locals and tourists alike. But, of course, it is the food that gets the most notice, and Lalewicz and Gorshe have been featured on local Portland and Seattle TV stations as well as nominated for Best Chef by ABC's Nightline. Lalewicz will kick off this year's wine dinner season on March 4 with a five-course meal hon-

**BEST BURGER**  
Runner-up: Buoy Beer Co., Astoria  
Honorable Mention: Portway Tavern, Astoria

**BEST CLAM CHOWDER**  
Runner-up: Dooger's Seafood & Grill, Warrenton  
Honorable Mention: Buoy Beer Co., Astoria

**BEST FINE DINING**  
Runner-up: Bridgewater Bistro, Astoria  
Honorable Mention: T. Paul's Supper Club, Astoria

**BEST CHEF**  
Runner-up: Sean Whittaker, Astoria  
Coffeehouse & Bistro, Astoria  
Honorable Mention: Andrew Catalano, Street 14 Cafe, Astoria



Photo by Lynette Rae McAdams

Every Wednesday night during the school year, the Depot hosts "Burger Night," where diners create the burger of their dreams from a seemingly endless list of topping choices.



Photo by Lynette Rae McAdams

Co-owner and executive chef Michael Lalewicz cuts a freshly glazed flourless chocolate tart in his kitchen at the Depot Restaurant in Seaview, Washington.



Photo by Lynette Rae McAdams

The Depot Restaurant's "Clamshell Railroad Clams Chowder" is made to order in a creamy broth, with whole wild Willapa Bay steamers and chopped Pacific razor clams.

and seated on a sturdy Kaiser-style bun that can somehow hold its own no matter what it's topped with, and the choices do abound. Using a checklist on the table, diners can choose from four patties — beef, buffalo, a grilled portobello mushroom or, for the first time this year, fried oysters — and any number of toppings, all for \$8.95.

Gorshe's personal favorite is a buffalo burger with pineapple, bacon and avocado with a side of sweet potato fries. "Michael doesn't understand how anyone could put pineapple on a burger!" she added, but still the choice is there.

### Best Burger and Clam Chowder

An off-season tradition, every Wednesday night from October through June, the Depot sheds its regular menu and becomes the most sought-after burger joint on the peninsula. A throwback to the building's tavern past, Gorshe said, "It has been a very fun way to say thanks to our local customers." On busy nights, they move about 100 patties.

The burgers are substantial: about as thick as a hockey puck with at least twice the circumference

Also available every night of the week, including Burger Nights, is Lalewicz's multi award-winning clam chowder. A playful retooling of the traditional New England-style staple, the Depot's features whole Willapa Bay steamers soaked awake in a garlicky cream base punctuated by chopped razor clams, leeks and potatoes. With each heavenly bowl made to order, this chowder has proven so popular it should probably have its own Yelp page.