BEST WINE SHOP

The Wine Shack

Cannon Beach, Oregon

Runner-up: The Cellar on 10th, Astoria

Honorable Mention: The Wine & Beer Haus, Seaside

By NANCY McCARTHY

A bottle of wine, a little cheese, some fresh bread — they're all available at The Wine Shack in Cannon Beach.

"We have a great selection of wines, and we're always doing wine tastings. We have created an experience," said Steven Sinkler, who owns the store with his wife, Maryann Sinkler.

For those wanting a local experience, The Wine Shack has pinots from the Willamette Valley, big reds from southern Oregon and Walla Walla, Washington, and, of course, The Wine Shack's very own Puffin wines.

"Puffin wines have won numerous awards — a platinum and lots of gold medals. The Puffin rosé won best of class," Sinkler said.

With every Puffin purchase, a donation is made to the Friends of Haystack Rock, a nonprofit committee that contributes to the Haystack Rock Awareness Program.

But there's more to The Wine Shack than bottles of fine wine. The store opens into Provisions 124, where everything desired for a romantic picnic on the beach or in a cozy hotel room is available. Gourmet cheeses, locally baked bread, jars of tasty olives, salami from Olympia Provisions, quality oils and vinegars, and even Puffin coffee roasted by Sleepy Monk of Cannon Beach are offered.

This year, The Wine Shack will undergo some "light remodeling," and a few more items will be added to Provisions 124, possibly including pasta and caviar.

The Readers' Choice award is an honor, Sinkler said.

"We're pleased to know they like the experience," he added.

The Wine Shack, 124 N. Hemlock St., Cannon Beach, is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Wine tastings during the winter are from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturdays; summer wine tastings are 1 to 5 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

Photo by Nancy McCarthy

Steven Sinkler displays one of the store's own Puffin wines, which have received several awards in wine competitions.

Photo by Nancy McCarthy

Steven Sinkler, co-owner of The Wine Shack, stands in front of the Cannon Beach shop, which voters named Best Wine Shop in this year's Readers' Choice Awards.

BEST GIFT SHOP

A Gypsy's Whimsy Herbal Apothecary

Astoria, Oregon

Runner-up: Farmhouse Funk, Astoria

Honorable Mention: Finn Ware, Astoria

Insider tip: This race was close. The winner, runner-up and honorable mention were each separated by only two votes.

Photo by Dwight Caswell

A Gypsy's Whimsy offers loose herbs and herbal teas for sale.

By DWIGHT CASWELL

A Gypsy's Whimsy has been at 1139 Commercial St. in Astoria for 14 years. The gift shop began as "a tiny herb store," says owner Vicky McAfee. A clinical herbalist and certified nutritionist, she sold herbs, 20 herbal teas, supplements, over 200 different tinctures, her own aromatherapy and therapeutic blends, and other body and wellness items. That all changed when she expanded into her current store, a room 10 times larger.

"In order to fill the space," she says, "I brought in things I was interested in." McAfee's interests are extensive and diverse. Buddhas of all sizes, a brass Hindu elephant god (Ganesha, remover of obstacles and lord of learning), masks, carved teak, whimsical (of course) items of all sorts, tea sets, and enough Day of the Dead items to last a Mexican village 10 years. There's also belly dancing scarves and jewelry ("It's the gypsy thing," says McAfee). Everywhere you turn, there's something new and fascinating.

All the gifts are either fair trade items or made in the United States. "I'm real picky," she says. If it's a supplement they have to have a lab in the U.S. I really research what I'm selling to make sure it's what they say it is." She likes things made of recycled materials, she says. "I'm very conscious of what I sell. I'm into healthy, natural, and good for the environment. If it's not, it's not in my shop."

The herbs, teas and supplements are still half of McAfee's business. "People know they can walk in and ask me questions about health, and I'll share my knowledge freely. It's my way of giving back to the community."

And the community has responded. The shop gets a lot of tourists, and some vacationers return year after year, but she says, "The locals are the ones who have kept A Gypsy's Whimsy going."

Photo by Dwight Caswell

A Gypsy's Whimsy is full of an assortment of different objects, like this brass Hindu elephant god Ganesha, remover of obstacles and lord of learning.

Crossword Answer

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