

**BEST FINE DINING**

**Carruthers**

Astoria, Oregon

**Runner-up:** The Depot, Seaview, Washington  
**Honorable Mention:** Bridgewater Bistro, Astoria

By DWIGHT CASWELL

The brainchild of Jim Defeo, of Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro, Carruthers had been in the planning stages for the better part of three years, but the downtown Astoria eatery only opened in August 2016. It is a remarkable achievement that, after only a few months, this establishment has been voted Best Fine Dining by Coast Weekend readers. Carruthers is now serving a new fall/winter menu, which makes this the right time to visit.

The first thing you notice when entering the restaurant, which is diagonally across the street from the Liberty Theater, is the spectacular décor. A massive fireplace, lofty mirrors and antiques are enhanced by the dark walls and soft lighting. It is as though you have walked back in time and into a fin de siècle grand hotel.

In fact, the historic Carruthers building was built in 1923, and the elegant style of the restaurant's interior reflects the Roaring '20s period.

The food, though, is contemporary, solidly based on classic cuisine, and as splendid as the room in which it is served. Chef Dan Brownson's new menu features food fit for the winter: hearty, rustic, done with panache and beautifully presented. Brownson, who moved to Carruthers after working at Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro, likes to work with spices, and he's always ready to try something new and exciting. You'll find dishes inspired



PHOTO BY DWIGHT CASWELL

A recent entree at Carruthers featured halibut cheeks served over Shitake black rice and charred bok choy with sweet pepper relish and preserved lemon marmalade.



PHOTO BY DWIGHT CASWELL

The menu at Carruthers, by Chef Dan Brownson, features dishes inspired by Russia, India, Greece, Italy and Spain.

by Russia, India, Greece, Italy and Spain, all exhibiting layers of flavor so that there is something new to discover with each bite. With dishes like halibut cheeks with charred bok choy, cast iron bacon-wrapped beef tenderloin, green chile posole, and fried octopus, the fare is as varied as it is flavorful.

The service is both friendly and attentive, never overbearing. If the goal at Carruthers is to be more than simply a fine dining establishment — but to be a marvelous experience of food, wine and cocktails for you and your friends — the restaurant has been wondrously successful.

The bread and desserts

(which are to die for) are made in-house, and the wines and spirits have been carefully chosen to enhance the dining experience. The restaurant is family friendly and has numerous gluten-free, vegetarian and even vegan choices on the menu. This coming summer, there are plans that include sidewalk dining and the return of the Cannery Cafe Apple Pie.

Carruthers is making a big splash on Astoria's gastronomic scene, so join the fun. Bon appétit!

*Carruthers is located at 1198 Commercial St. and is open 4 to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; and 4 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.*

**BEST SERVER**

**Jean-Marc Bourgouin**

Carruthers, Astoria, Oregon

**Runner-up:** Allyx O'Connor, Street 14 Cafe, Astoria  
**Honorable Mention:** Aaron Crockett, T. Paul's Supper Club, Astoria

By DWIGHT CASWELL

Jean-Marc Bourgouin first drove through Astoria 16 years ago, saw "this beautiful little place," and decided to make his home here. He's been honing his skills as a server ever since — and so appreciative are Coast Weekend readers that they have named him the Best Server in the area yet again. (Bourgouin won Best Server for numerous years when he worked at 42nd Street Cafe in Seaview, Washington.)

Forty minutes before opening, Bourgouin can be found bustling around Carruthers, compulsively

inspecting the restaurant. He removes a spec of this or that, wipes a table and makes all-but-invisible alterations in a room that looks beautiful already.

Bourgouin is something of a perfectionist, which is acceptable in his case because he is also caring. "I treat people the way I like to be treated," he says.

Bourgouin is the main reason the service at Carruthers is as good as it is. He sets a standard and encourages others to follow his example. He describes what he does in simple terms, but few servers anywhere actually carry it



PHOTO BY DWIGHT CASWELL

Experienced waiter Jean-Marc Bourgouin, of Carruthers in Astoria, was named Best Server in this year's Coast Weekend Readers' Choice Awards.

off: "I want to make sure, as soon as you come in, that we are taking care of you and that we answer all your questions. It should be effortless for you, because you are here to have a good experience."

**BEST YOGA**

**RiverZen Yoga**

Astoria, Oregon

**Runner-up:** Astoria Arts & Movement Center, Astoria  
**Honorable Mention:** Seaside Yoga, Seaside

Peggy and Dave Stevens opened RiverZen Yoga and Resistance Studio in Astoria in 2012. The yoga studio, located at 399 31st St. on the Astoria Riverwalk, offers over 40 weekly group classes and private yoga lessons.

You'll find classes that range from gentle yoga and qigong walking to high-energy intensive pilates, kickboxing aerobics and more. RiverZen instructors guide students to move at their own pace and level.



PHOTO BY LUKE WHITTAKER

Peggy and Dave Stevens own RiverZen Yoga.

In the fall, RiverZen opened a second location on the waterfront in Ilwaco, Washington.

In addition to its paid

yoga and stretching classes, RiverZen offers five free community classes each week, three in Astoria and two in Ilwaco.