

MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local
restaurant review

'THE LAST SUPPER' AT STREET 14

Dinner service at Street 14 Cafe, whose menu was rewritten each week to welcome seasonally available ingredients from local farms, and whose dishes were among the most exciting, exquisite and thoughtful on the North Coast, ended April 1. It was 1 1/2 years old.

Causes were economic.

Co-owner Jennifer Cameron-Lattek confirmed the cessation of dinner service.

"We weren't able to reach the number of people we needed," Cameron-Lattek said, noting the cost of high-quality ingredients and the labor-intensive menu evolution.

Breakfast and lunch service at Street 14 will continue.

"As much as it can be," Cameron-Lattek said of the April 1 closing, "it was a good time for this time to happen," noting that the planned departure of daytime employees enabled Street 14 to retain all staff. Chef Andy Catalano will stay on for a few months before beginning a new venture (stay tuned to this column for details!).

Street 14's dinner service began in October 2015, following a crowd-funded upgrade to the kitchen.

"If I was to distill our mission to one value," Catalano told Coast Weekend earlier this year, "it is to be a part of the community and to support our local farms." He did so with meals that reflected the seasons and flavors of the North Coast. (A final menu listed 21 partners, a who's-who of farmers, purveyors and foragers in the area.) While working with nearby ranchers and fisherman, the heart of Street 14's dishes were seasonally available vegetables.

Well-versed in a wide variety of styles, Catalano transformed those exceedingly fresh ingredients with both a reverence for classical technique and a boundless sense of creativity, earning himself "Best Chef" honor in the 2016 Coast Weekend Readers Choice Awards.



Olive Oil-Poached Halibut with white beans, clams and spring greens.

Catalano's everchanging menu regularly included worldly components and techniques rarely found on the North Coast. As such, server and front-of-house impresario Allyx O'Connor found a common refrain to demystify dishes that might as well have been — and often were — based in foreign languages: "I've learned a lot of new words today," she'd say. "So let me know if you have any questions." In translating the kitchen's heady concepts humbly, O'Connor and crew were recognized as "Best Customer Service" in the 2016 Coast Weekend Readers Choice Awards.

Besides critical acclaim — including high praise from this column — Street 14 developed a devout following.

"It's wrecked me," said Elaine, one of Street 14's most fervent regulars. "Nowhere else is this good."

While breathless appreciation for the food abounded, deeper connections developed. When Elaine first learned of Street 14's impending closure she burst into tears.

"Elaine is part of the family here," a server said.

Elaine and other members of that extended family — including farmers, former employees and other reverent regulars — gathered at Street 14's final engagements. Menus bore the title: "The Last Suppers."

On offer was the usual, which is to say, culinary reflections of the North Coast at that very moment in time. Perhaps no dish during the final two weekends more represented the region than the Olive Oil-Poached Halibut (\$27), with white beans, clams, spring greens and edible flowers. In high-contrast greens and white, the dish vibrantly intertwined the



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Sprouting Broccoli Salad, lemon curd, almonds and fried capers.

space where ocean and land meet.

"No one does halibut like Andy," Elaine said. "Even a few seconds too long and you can ruin it." She wasn't wrong.

Then there was the Fregola Sarda (\$16), a dish with the kind of slippery name that O'Connor translated so elegantly. A Sardinian pasta, Fregola Sardo is a couscous with pebble-sized pellets. It was salty, sleek and understated. Shavings of cured egg were subtle and thickening, pickled mustard seeds tangy. Brussels sprouts were an earthly tether, and cubes of perfectly crusted pancetta burst with savory, succulent fat.

The most indicative offering of the final two weekends, though, was vegetable based: the Sprouting Broccoli Salad (\$10). It might sound ridiculous, but the neatly manicured mound, with meaty almonds, fried capers and broccoli coated with sweet, tangy, smooth lemon curd approached something like dessert — a very green dessert, mind you, and surely appropriate as a starter salad, but a sweet treat nonetheless. And herein is the genius of Catalano and Street 14 — nowhere on the North Coast would dare dream up such

raw flavor combinations, much less execute them so successfully and simply.

Of course, there were actual desserts at the Last Supper. I had the Ricotta Cheesecake, which included more delightful lemon curd. Here too was a revelation: the cheesecake was only minimally sweetened. After the Olive Oil-Poached Halibut, with its tangible transference of terroir via green leaves and edible flowers, my palette had been recalibrated, free from the salt-sugar roller coaster. All together, the meal was enlivened and satisfying in the most essential, holistic senses.

I lingered, dragging slices of the cheesecake through the creamy lemon curd, trying to stretch out time. I didn't want to leave, or for Street 14 to close. I realized that, ratings be damned, Street 14 was my personal favorite restaurant on the North Coast. It was the most challenging, innovative and rewarding; the first place I'd mention when asked for a recommendation. And here it was, shuttering well before it's time. Or, perhaps all along, Street 14 was ahead of its time.

The mood in those waning moments was mixed — forlorn but not wholly despairing. Fortunately no one would lose their livelihood. (A soundtrack of irrefutably joyous 1950s rock 'n' roll certainly helped.) While lilting, a spirit prevailed: the confidence that all involved were honored to have been a part of, or to have partaken in, something special: not only marvelous nourishment but the forging of community, in realizing labors of love.

"We rolled the dice," Cameron-Lattek said. "But when you're doing something you believe in, even if it doesn't work out the way you want, you can't regret that you tried. It really was a dinner service that we were really proud of."