

MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local
restaurant review



Sliced Beet Salad



Oyster Po Boy Sliders



Tuna Melt with Yoshida Teriyaki Chicken Salad

GEARHART CROSSING

Rating: ★★☆☆

599 Pacific Way
Gearhart, Ore., 97138

Phone: 503-738-7312

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Friday and Saturday; 9 a.m.
to 8 p.m. Sunday, Monday,
Tuesday and Thursday

Price: \$ – Entrées hover
around the teens, and
quickly add up

Service: Casual, cheerful

Vegetarian/Vegan Options:

A few choices for vegetarians

Drinks: Beer, wine, soda, tea,
coffee

KEY TO STAR RATING SYSTEM

- ★ Below average
- ★★ Average
- ★★★ Good
- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★★ Best in region

Gearhart Crossing's brewpub dabbles in personalizing the predictable

Review and photos by
THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA
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In late March, the long-running Gearhart Grocery became Gearhart Crossing, an all-ages restaurant and pub.

But vestiges of the market remain.

There are deli cases filled with meats, pasta salads and sweet treats. There are baked goods, beer coolers and coffee, as well as a smattering of produce, crackers, household items and so on — essentially a “best of” the bygone grocery store.

The remnants of the market ring the brew pub, like a business nested within a business. The pub is walled in from the sundries, creating a more relaxing inner space. The windowless pub is made mostly of reclaimed materials. It's an uncluttered, mostly blank slate. Tables of mixed designs are scattered about before a gleaming, natural wood bar and beneath glowing flat-screens.

The menu is composed mostly of sandwiches, burgers and other upper-scale pub grub like nachos and wings. And while I have certainly whined about the unending prolif-

eration of burger and beer joints on the North Coast, the Crossing's basic offerings seem to make sense in downtown Gearhart. As it is, they're the only game in the downtown area (one of two) where you wouldn't feel like a total slob if you showed up in a tank top. (Across the street at Pacific Way, fine dining is pretty well staked out.)

While little at the Crossing is surprising, the kitchen does a reasonable job of making dishes their own by incorporating an array of in-house processes like pickling, smoking and curing.

Fermentation not only gives the tomatoes on the Tuna Melt (\$12) extra depth and tang, it rescues them from the withering curse afflicting so many that haven't been just-plucked off the vine. The open-faced sandwich was blanketed with melted Havarti. Underneath was a creamy, mayo-mustard mix with Skipanon tuna and baguette beds. Bites were gooey, salty and delightfully smooth.

I longed for some signature on the Oyster Po Boy Sliders (\$12) appetizer. At a place that pickles all

kinds of fruits, veggies, meats and their own coleslaw, I was vexed that the Po Boys came “dressed”-style (with lettuce and tomato, rather than pickles and slaw). As it was, the oysters had a satisfying bread-y crunch while remaining almost structureless within. And when I asked for a few pickles on the side and popped them in ... Ahhh, I was there. Delightful, crunchy, creamy, slurpy.

In the Pineapple Porker Melt (\$13), the pickling of pineapples nearly went awry. While the more acidic treatment of the pineapples was interesting in its own right, the pork called for more sweetness, which the pineapples were almost wholly sapped of. A little more cheese wouldn't have hurt, either. The shards of pork were well cooked, crisp on the outside, soft inside, but I couldn't help thinking that with just a tweak or two with the ingredients already on hand — see again: slaw — the Porker could really sing.

Now, of course, I chose slaw as a side dish and eventually combined the two. Which, in a way, is

fine, though it robs you of a side. At Gearhart Crossing, there are a few options for accompaniment. While you won't find fries (or anything else that requires a deep fryer), most dishes include a choice of chips, potato salad or slaw. For a dollar more you can upgrade to one of the deli case salads. During my trips, that meant mostly varieties of pasta salad — weighty, picnic-y dishes that are good for sharing.

There was also a bit of greenery, like the broccoli-bacon-apple salad which, while dressed, was unappealing in its big-headed rawness. None of what I tried, neither the Yoshida Teriyaki Chicken Salad (with taut cabbage, clipped ramen noodles and chicken in a slippery-sweet teriyaki) nor the Shrimp Macaroni (with green onions and celery) made a distinctive mark. But were I in need of extra protein and carbs after a busy day on the beach, they'd do the trick. Nevertheless: The extra dollar to get in the deli case buys significantly more food.

And at the Crossing, that's no afterthought.

While no price is quite offensive on its own, they stack up quickly. Two drinks, two burgers and tip could easily approach \$50. It's

'THE KITCHEN DOES A REASONABLE JOB MAKING DISHES THEIR OWN.'

Gearhart. We get it.

The Sliced Beet Salad (\$11) — with softened, almost gelatinous, roasted, marinated and thinly sliced beets, along with blue cheese, hazelnuts and a mix of greens dominated by frisée — is no more than the sum of its parts.

I appreciate that the Crossing gets its beef from Reed & Hertig and grinds it fresh for burgers. The Loaded Steak Dip (\$14) resembled different sandwiches in different bites. Sometimes, with a lot of cheese and caramelized onions, it approached a cheesesteak. Then there were earthy, dark oils, laden with mushroom, or the zip of sharp, briny peppers. The beef, cut thin, stacked about an inch high, was so tender and juicy as to almost render the accompanying au jus obsolete.

The sandwich was — as much of Gearhart Crossing's offerings are — prepared precisely, with ingredients of above-average quality. And while there are a few flourishes, certainly a few more wouldn't hurt. **CW**