

# MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local  
restaurant review

## Shelburne Inn a historic setting to savor local bounty

Review and photos by  
**THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA**  
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Every hour, at about five till, the Shelburne Inn's grandfather clock emits a metallic clang. The clock, built in Glasgow by Robert Robertson in 1780, predates the Shelburne — Washington State's longest continually running hotel, which began hosting guests in 1896 — by more than 100 years.

"Every piece, every gear of that clock was made by hand," beams Shelburne co-owner David Campiche.

Most everything in the dining room and the historic Seaview hotel follows suit: From the frosty stained glass, to the light fixtures and furniture, to the ceramic flower pots on each table — almost all are hand-made. A sense, not only of history, but of lasting, artistic craft abounds.

Just stepping into the lobby is transportive. Over the bulging floors, nooks beckon — there are tales to be told. To the south is the pub; to the right, the parlor — named the "Inglenook" — and through another set of windowed doors, the intimate dining room.

This review will focus on the dining room; to me, it and the pub are distinct entities.

On my first visit, the Inglenook hosted a pianist twinkling on a baby grand. While his playing drifted into the dining room, the mood was rather hushed. Couples spoke in whispers and yet could still be overheard. Many conversations were inspired by the food.

My second visit was far more lively. The loosening was due, in part, to the presence of Portland blues guitarist Terry Robb, who performed in the shadow of that



The Roasted Maple Leaf Farms Duck Breast

grandfather clock, his fingers gliding and bending with transcendent facility over the strings of his 1947 Martin guitar. Smooth, never rushing, he plucked tunes like John Fahey's "Requiem for John Hurt," as well as a number by Hurt himself. Clearly, Robb had put in his 10,000 hours of practice and then some. He was marvelous.

But the evening's gracious, reverent mood was also due to the presence of Campiche, who served as host and server during the rush. As dinner wound down, he cultivated a salon, delighting as a roundtable of well-fed artists and bourgeoisie held bubbly court. (Note: Campiche is a regular contributor to Coast Weekend and was not consulted for this review.)

Along with the regular menu, dinner that evening included the first prix fixe meal under chef Geoff Gunn, who came aboard a few months prior. Before taking the over reins of the Shelburne's kitchen, Gunn was chef de cuisine at Astoria's esteemed Bridgewater Bistro.

"There is nothing we can't put on a plate or in a glass that can't be found within 100 miles," Gunn said in the Shelburne's press announcement.

That sentiment was realized in the \$60 prix fixe menu Gunn con-



The Dashi (seared albacore, broccoli, chantrelles, greens and rice in a broth)

cocted to coincide with the Garden Tour taking place on the Long Beach Peninsula that weekend. Chef Gunn harvested the lion's share of the produce for the evening's special menu at Ilwaco's Biocharm Farm.

In keeping with the Garden Tour theme, Gunn incorporated herbs and flowers. Each dish had bright, newly picked edible flowers. And as I strolled out through the garden, it came into focus like a movie with a great reveal: There were the flowers I just ate — they came from the Shelburne's own gardens!

Two of the fixed menu's three courses illuminated Gunn's interest in pan-Asian flavors (he came up as a chef in Hawaii).

The meal began with a natty plated spring roll, with the requisite sauce swirls of soy glaze and Thai peanut sauce. While it was the freshest damn spring roll I've ever had — thanks to the Thai basil, kohlrabi and kale — it was mostly a lot of vermicelli and herbs. I longed for more protein; too many bites were without the furrowed, dainty Alaskan spot prawn.

And therein is one of my few criticisms of the Shelburne: the appetizers need work. The regular menu's choices, like asparagus and fries (even if they come with duck fat), were pricey and, in some case, unenticing. Chef Gunn has room to grow here.

Dashi — with seared albacore, broccoli, chanterelles, greens and

rice in a subtle, mushroom-y broth — was the fixed menu's main course. And if I were a professional athlete with the bank account to match, this is how I'd eat day-to-day: lean, mean and local. The tuna steaks were seared to form a divine salty, crisp crust, while still buttery and near-raw in the center (some more so than others). A bed of lightly seasoned, perfectly cooked rice hidden under the greens made the meal slyly substantial. Besides the crust, the best bite of the dashi was the vivid orange flower that adorned it. Within the center of its leafy, earthy core were little capsules that gushed with sweetness.

The dashi appealed as much to outputs as inputs. As opposed to death-row decadence, this was healthy, thoughtful eating — the kind of meal one bounds or floats away from, rather than shuffling with heavy eyelids. It had, in just two courses, recalibrated my palate. Such refinement was rewarded with dessert: a guomi berry and kirschwasser crème brûlée. The sudden reintroduction of fats, sugars and creams came on like a tidal wave. The shell, however, was a tad glassy and overdone. I enjoyed the fresh cherry and whipped cream topping more than the crème brûlée itself.

On another trip, I tried the Roasted Maple Leaf Farms Duck Breast (\$30), which featured a glaze of Gunn's creation that I found deeply, vexingly pert and very much

### SHELburne INN

Rating: ★★★★★

4415 Pacific Way  
Seaview, Wash., 98644

360-642-2442

Hours: 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
Monday through Sunday

Price: \$\$\$ – Most entrées are around \$30

**Vegetarian / Vegan Options:**  
Suitable, flexible, teeming with fresh produce

**Service:** Charming though not always prescient

**Drinks:** Full bar, coffee, tea

#### KEY TO STAR RATING SYSTEM

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

the star of the dish. It took repeated questions to discern what my palate couldn't in the cherry-pomegranate glaze: chipotle peppers. (Gunn developed the recipe while at Bridgewater.) The duck medalions themselves were like the tuna: some — the majority, in fact — were perfect, but not without variation.

The Blueberry Dutch Baby dessert (\$9), though, was absolutely unassailable. It pitted a sizzling, still-cooking blueberry pancake in a small cast-iron pan against a cup of cooling, honey cardamom, goat-cheese based ice cream (that incorporated chèvre from one favorite producers in the area: Skamakowa Farmstead Creamery). From the cake and fruits vs. the creams, to the heat vs. the soothing freeze, down to the visuals — playing square vs. circle — the execution was perfect, the coming together of contrast.

While I lingered on dessert, the old grandfather clock chimed for a second time that evening. It made me aware of time in the present, the meal's luxurious, leisurely pace. If time is how you spend it, then a meal that sees the clock strike more than once is spending it pretty well. **CW**