

# MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local  
restaurant review

## AREA SPORTS BAR ROUNDUP

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**F**ew pastimes are more closely associated with food than football. And since it's that time of year, we're rounding up the best places on the coast to watch a game, and what to order while you're there.

But first, what makes a good sports bar? Clear views, heaping snacks and room to spread out and relax when your belly's full.

Now, on to the contenders...

### ASTORIA

Of all the sports bar options on the North Coast, the Merry Time Bar and Grill is my first overall draft pick. There are plenty of TVs, a projector and active fandom when local teams play.

Better yet: The food is better than the dive-y digs might suggest. Better, better yet: Merry Time's reasonable prices make hunkering down for a few hours possible without breaking the bank.

Usually I can't help but order the burger, with a potently seasoned, perfectly cooked, thick and juicy hand-pressed patty. But there are other solid game-time options, including the tangy, creamy Po' Boy and the loaded Idaho Nachos that swap out chips for potatoes. Plus, Merry Time has tater tots, which, for whatever reason, feel so much more football-appropriate than fries.

### CANNON BEACH

While replete with restaurants, Cannon Beach doesn't have a traditional sports bar. Still, there are places that can get the job done. The most ideal, where you could actually hoot and holler without catching too many sideways glances, is the Cannon Beach Hardware and Public House.

The TVs are tucked up a bit, but they make up for it with some of the best chicken wings in the region.



LEFT: Merry Time Bar & Grill's Gorgeous Burger with bacon and gorgonzola MIDDLE: The pizza and salad bar at Bubba's Sports Bar in Warrenton RIGHT: The Cannon Beach Hardware and Public House is nicknamed the Screw & Brew.

Here's how to make them really shine: Order the Salt and Pepper variety and get sauce on the side. Not sitting in and sopping up the sauce affords a delightfully crispy skin. Fried cleanly, the calamari at the Hardware Store are another hit. Make a fried food's all-star team by ordering them both.

Oh, and it's worth a mention: the Hardware Store is one of the rare places on the North Coast where you can watch most Trail Blazers games. (It's a long story. In short: Comcast is essentially holding the broadcasts hostage from other cable providers. Boo!)

### SEASIDE

More than any town in the area, Seaside is replete with sports bars. Last week I reviewed Dundee's Bar & Grill, which has more TVs than anyone could ever need, including personal screens in some booths. There's also a salad bar, pizza and an icy track to keeps drinks frosty cold. Dundee's fare, all very sports-bar centric, is dependable if unspectacular. Neither a franchise player nor benchwarmer, Dundee's delivers in a limited roll.

Just a few doors down, the Twisted Fish does much the same. (Twisted Fish is also a hub for pay-per-view boxing and mixed martial arts broadcasts.) But, as these bars are in ground zero of Seaside's

tourist mecca, local fans may seek a more home-y experience. For that, the Relief Pitcher is the place. It's another cozy dive where the food exceeds the funky surroundings. And while some tout the burgers, the Tuna Reuben is a singular North Coast flagship.

### WARRENTON

If you happen to be a Pittsburg transplant, there's no better place to wave your Terrible Towel than Bubba's Sports Bar. With wall-to-wall Steelers memorabilia, it's a temple to the black and yellow, a man-cave collection that outgrew the basement.

Still, Bubba's pretty cave-y, with a trio of gargantuan flat screens in the windowless rear. It's also loud, which, in the right moment, can be invigorating. Food is handled by the adjacent Fultano's Pizza, which whips up burgers, subs, fried things and so on. During the right hours, there's no better deal for chowing throughout a game than the all-you-can-eat pizza and salad bar. The pies are parlor-style, with snapping thin crust and loads of greasy cheese. Wings are touted, too, but they need work. If you like 'em spicy, order at least a level above what you'd normally get. The "hot" is essentially mild, "very hot" medium, etc. Spice aside, though, they lack developed flavor.

### MANZANITA/NEHALEM

This one is a tossup, one that depends on the level of your fandom. If you're a dyed-in-the-wool devotee, I'd go with the Manzanita Lighthouse Pub & Grub, where you'll have more room and better sight lines. While the burgers are worthwhile, the calzone is a near football-sized hunk of golden dough, gooey cheese and salty meats that anyone short of an NFL lineman would be hard-pressed to finish.

But if you're looking for a more casual experience, a place to chat with friends and dine while keeping an eye on the score in the fourth quarter, the San Dune Pub might be more appealing. Their burgers are terrific. So's the Po' Boy.

### GEARHART

Like Cannon Beach, Gearhart doesn't have any honest-to-goodness sports bars. Gearhart Crossing has a few TVs, it's cave-y and, for pub fare, pretty thoughtful.

The most memorable dish I had there, and the one I most want again, is the Tuna Melt. There are burgers and wings, too, but something about Gearhart Crossing doesn't exactly scream football in the most populist sense. If that's what you need, try BJ's Pizza Palace & Sports Bar, which, while technically in Seaside, is just a few minutes away. And, while the pizza doesn't disappoint, BJ's has

broasted chicken, which couldn't be more football-appropriate. Seriously — the '85 Bears probably had a broaster in the locker room.

### LONG BEACH PENINSULA

I'm tempted to point to Ilwaco's Salt Pub, as I have indeed enjoyed a game there, and because just about everything on the menu strikes a terrific balance between hearty and refined. But there are only a few TVs. If you don't get the right seat, you're out of luck.

The Columbia River Roadhouse offers more assured viewing comfort plus NFL Sunday Ticket. Oddly enough, what I recall most fondly from my trips to the Roadhouse is the corbread. It's a just-right mix of moist and crumbly, with mellow sweetness and flecks of corn kernels adding supple texture. Sure, you could have the ribs or meatloaf (just so long as you get the corbread as a side). But let's be clear: I wouldn't proffer the Roadhouse's options as an example of stunning BBQ to a southerner. (Too bad Mericle's Epic Eats closed. They would surely have made this list.)

Beyond that, though, I haven't spent too much time watching games on the Peninsula. So, Seahawks fans, where's the best place to eat and watch a game in your neighborhood? That goes for the rest of you, too: Ducks, Beavers, Blazers, Timbers — let's hear it! **CW**