

MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local
restaurant review

The Fishermen meets the tourist- pleasing bar — and sometimes clears it

Review and photos by
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For a time The Fishermen, one of four stalls in Seaside's mini food court on Broadway, served only chowder and fish and chips. That changed with ownership early this year.

After years of working in area restaurants, including the Pig 'N Pancake, new owner-operator Luis filled out the Fishermen's menu, adding burgers, sandwiches, breakfast and more.

Because his experience is in the back-of-the-house, that Luis has yet to dial in things like branding is perhaps no surprise. The Fishermen has no online presence to speak of. Google finds ... everything but. And until the name gets nailed down — it's spelled "Fishermen" and "Fisherman" in different places — perhaps that's for the best. (As it's a one-man operation, might I vote for the singular "Fisherman"?)

Such lack of clarity — including an absence of posted hours, contact information and so on — may not end up as deal-breakers. (Accepting only cash, however, might.) Luis seems to be betting that his location, smack dab in the middle of Broadway's tourist vortex, will produce

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"Fisherman" or "Fishermen"?

a steady stream of hungry visitors to which he can deliver "beach-y" standbys like fish and chips, chowder and burgers at reasonable prices with easy counter service. From what I sampled over a few trips, The Fishermen meets those bars and occasionally clears them.

Indeed, a traveler in search of fish and chips could do far worse. In the midst of tourist traps like Broadway, you can certainly pay more for inferior products like pre-packaged burger patties and fish that was caught and breaded halfway across the globe.

To be sure, the seafood at the Fishermen doesn't come off local boats, but it is properly prepared. Luis says he cuts the fish himself and breads it to order. As such it can take a bit longer, but it's worth the wait. The four tennis ball-sized chunks of cod (\$9.95) came out scalding hot and were a joy on a frigid day. (Even when



Reuben sandwich



Cod fish and chips

the weather's warm, fried fish should be blazing hot.) Inside Panko'd crust, the cod was flaky and tender, if unremarkable. Nonetheless, I was plenty satisfied by the temperature and crunch.

As it happens, last week a group of landlocked friends visited for the weekend, and they wanted fish and chips. Recalling so many slap-dash fish and chips I've munched as the Mouth, I thought for a moment about trying to change their minds. Then I remembered I was once like them, and that associations with place

and food are deeply ingrained; they punctuate seaside visits.

The same goes for chowder, which so many coastal restaurants include out of obligation rather than inspiration. The Fishermen's clam chowder (\$4.50 cup, \$5.50 bowl) is of this ilk: thick, buttery, salty, uniformly standard. But like the fish and chips, I was buoyed by the Fishermen's portion and value. Their cup was near the size of the average bowl.

In my trips to the Fishermen, though, I ended up enjoying the turf more than the surf.

THE FISHERMEN

Rating: ★★

200 Broadway, No. 4
Seaside, Ore., 97138

Hours: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Thursday through Tuesday

Price: \$ – Fair value, cash only

Service: Food court counter service

Vegetarian / Vegan Options:
Pretty meaty

Drinks: Bottled water, soda

KEY TO STAR RATING SYSTEM

- ★ Poor
- ★★ Below average
- ★★★ Worth returning
- ★★★★ Very good
- ★★★★★ Excellent, best in region

On toasted marble rye, the Reuben (\$9) was just about everything it should be: slurpy, briny, sweet, salty and bulging with thick-sliced pastrami.

And the burgers (starting at \$7 with fries ... or is it \$8? The menu has them both ways), are chubby, juicy and hand-pressed. They're lightly seasoned, but the beef was of a reasonable quality. I had the Bacon & Blue Burger (\$10 with fries). The blue cheese was a tad mild, but the bacon was supple, cooked just right.

The burger, like the Reuben, was prepared and assembled with care. But I couldn't help but wonder what Luis might do with a menu that incorporated more of himself — a menu that traded, say, the club sandwich for something distinct or creative.

But in the thick of Broadway St., pleasing tourists is job No. 1. The Fishermen's scratch processes, attentive construction and value ought to do just that. In such a setting, exciting the Mouth — and, by extension, I hope, locals — is a distant second.

Yet Luis manages to make me smile in a different light. I'm pleased to see anyone take a chance and step out from the kitchen of regional chains to be their own boss. **CW**