

# SOUP'S ON! ALIMENTO ASTORIA DELIVERS UNIQUE SOUPS TO YOUR DOORSTEP

By **RYAN HUME**  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

**W**hen the weather turns sour, a hot bowl of soup can be nourishing, reinvigorating — heart-warming even. It's just what is needed to get through the soggy months on the North Coast. Now imagine finding that elixir, scratch-made yet refined, sitting on the porch every Monday evening with a freshly baked chunk of bread to mop it up.

Thanks to Alimento Astoria, this can be a reality. For \$16 a week, a quart of expertly crafted seasonal soup and a hefty wedge of bread could land at the front door in a returnable Mason jar or other reusable vessel.

So how did this happen? The idea for this local soup delivery service was born of bread. No stranger to fermentation and preservation, chef Andrew Catalano has long been fascinated with baking bread.

"I stopped a few years ago when we had a child," Catalano said. "I just recently got back into it in the fall, and was baking so much bread, I had no outlet for it. And I thought, soup and bread? Perfect. Let's give it a try."

Catalano wants to reclaim bread's place at the table.

"Part of my motivation for doing something with bread was the bad rap it has gotten over the last few years," Catalano said, referencing gluten's notorious cultural status. "I eat whole grains every day. The thing about these breads is I source my wheat from Northwest farms. It's all organic, from ancient strains of wheat. Wheat today is very different than it was a thousand years ago. There's no commercial yeast. Everything is fully fermented so it's much more digestible. It's just a completely different animal than the bread you would buy at the supermarket."

Catalano gained a well-deserved reputation for his knowledgeable, locally sourced cuisine a few years back when he ran the kitchen at Street 14 Café's much-missed dinner service. Since then, he launched Alimento Astoria, a carefully curated, sustainable meal-kit ser-



Photos by Ryan Hume

**Alimento chef Andrew Catalano delivers soup and bread to Holly Owen.**

vice that offers the raw ingredients for three dinners for two adults every Friday. Think Blue Apron by farms within walking distance.

Catalano is also deeply involved with the North Coast Food Web, where he prepares Alimento's weekly meal kits in their professional kitchen and often hosts much sought-after dinners on special occasions with limited seating. Following a sold-out dinner event at Street 14 on Friday, Jan. 25, Catalano will again man the range for a benefit for the Food Web on Saturday, Feb. 23. At \$150 a head, this fundraiser will boast four courses, plus an amuse-bouche and wine pairings to boot. Tickets are on sale.

### 'Start the week off'

As of this writing, soup service is now 10 weeks strong and Catalano is hoping to extend it at least throughout the winter.

This could not be better news for Holly Owen, a frequent subscriber to Alimento Astoria's \$84 weekly meal kit (\$14 a portion).

"Is there any better way to start the

week off than with soup at your door?" Owen said.

Much like his entrees, Catalano infuses deep flavors into his soups from simple, wholesome ingredients — all of which are locally sourced and often arise from Catalano's vast pantry of fermentations and pickles. Recent offerings include a thin polenta with pickled garlic scapes, a Moroccan chicken stew with preserved lemons and an heirloom bean soup with kale, roasted onions and pickled peppers, one of Owen's favorites.

### Taste test

Coast Weekend recently tested one of Catalano's soup kits to see if could maintain the hype. Fortunately, it did in spades.

Catalano comes to recipes by way of the ingredients, and on this particular week, beets from Glory B Farm in Grays River, Wash., inspired a borscht. This bright purple Eastern European soup was finished with cabbage from Spring Up Farm in Knappa, shallots from over in Lewis and Clark territory and parsnips and turnips from Catalano's own garden.



**Bread and borscht from Alimento Astoria.**

The inclusion of both roasted and pickled beets, as well as fresh cabbage and homemade fermented sauerkraut, gave this simple, peasant-approved combination of five vegetables much more depth of flavor than should seem possible. Every last drop was infused with a swirl of sweet and sour goodness.

This was only heightened by pairing the soup with a fermented oat porridge sourdough bread. Chewy, tangy, with a crisp, crackable crust — perfect for lapping up the last drizzle of brightly hued broth. This loaf was the result of a 36-hour fermentation beginning with Catalano's own sourdough start.

And really, if soup is not on the menu, that's no reason to avoid Catalano's incredible breads. He sells a few whole loaves every Thursday at the North Coast Food Web, but you'll have to pounce as these sell out quick.

Owen is hoping that Catalano will start selling his pizza dough commercially.

"I'm the idea person," she said. "It's the best job because I don't have to do anything."

"I'll get around to it someday," Catalano replied. 