

# SCRATCHPAD

## Readers' Choice winners, voters uphold region's standards of excellence

Now presenting the best of the coast

By **ERICK BENGEL**  
COAST WEEKEND

This special issue of Coast Weekend reveals the winners of the 2018 Readers' Choice contest — the annual celebration of the best businesses, dining options and activities in the Columbia-Pacific.

In these pages, we highlight a handful of winners. The ones who

took multiple first-place awards got the center-spread treatment (see pages 14 and 15).

Though most readers — more than 2,000 — voted online, the dozens of write-in ballots we received made a tremendous difference, often deciding first, second and third place. In a few categories, first place was decided by a single paper ballot.



Last year, I offered some cheery, egalitarian sentiments about how everyone who contributes to our community — who



strives every day to perfect the part of the coast that belongs to them — is by definition a winner. I stand by those words.

That said, it doesn't take a keen sense of pattern recognition to notice certain winners popping up year after year. I wonder if the time has come to shake things up a bit. Maybe in the 2019 contest, you'll see some new categories. For example: Best Barista Other Than Kristy Cross. Now that Cross has destroyed the competition seven years running, perhaps we need to force voters to spread the honors around a bit.

I kid, of course. It's not fair to punish the great for their greatness. Readers' Choice is nothing if not a meritocracy.

The people who vote and the people they vote for are engaged in the same project: upholding standards of excellence. The owners of a beloved local store and voters who acknowledge the owners' outstanding efforts both help make the region the best it can be.

The list of winners, runners-up and honorable mentions (see Page 4) is a record of the people, places and pursuits that our lives revolve around. These are the makers of memories and the keepers of quality in our corner of the world. We all win because they have chosen to be here.

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