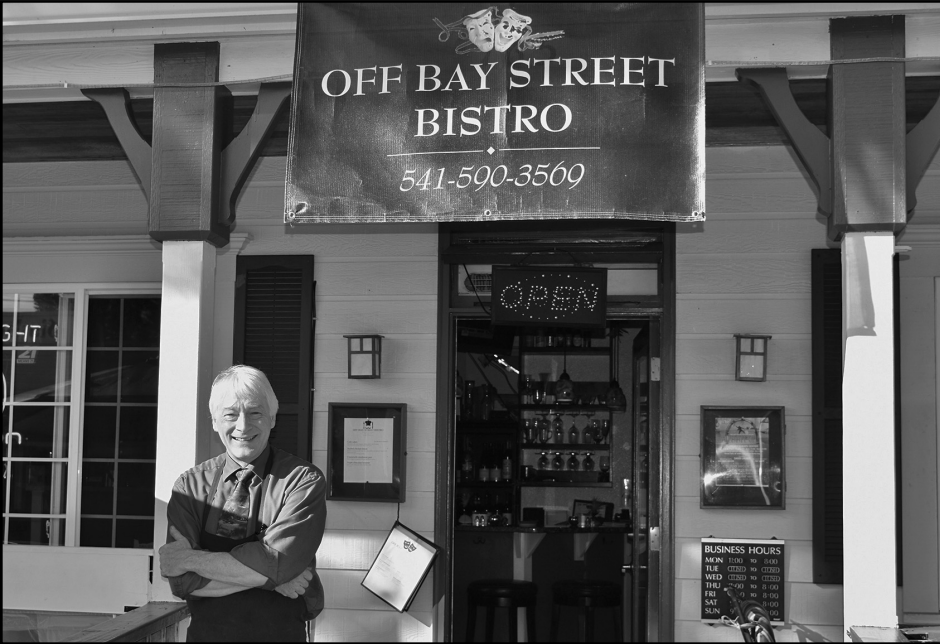


# Old world inspiration pairs with new twists at Off Bay Street Bistro



**STORY & PHOTO BY MARK BRENNAN SIUSLAW NEWS**

Florence has a wide array of restaurants that offer many types of cuisine and decor for the enjoyment of their customers. The latest addition to these widely differing takes on food and fun is The Off Bay Street Bistro, located at 165 Maple St. in Historic Old Town Florence.

Paul Meeker is head chef and owner of the new restaurant and he was pleased when the opportunity to operate his own eatery presented itself.

"I have been in the restaurant industry for 20 plus years, including as a culinary arts teacher, and have been dreaming of my owning my own restaurant for a while," Paul said. "My girlfriend, Kim, also has 20 plus years in the restaurant industry. When we heard of Maple Street Grill selling, we were enthusiastic and excited about the opportunity."

Paul and Kim are both involved in all aspects of

the restaurant, and the two have extensive culinary experience which they have been waiting to share with the public. Off Bay Street Bistro is the manifestation of this long-held dream.

Another aspect that Paul considered when deciding on a location for the restaurant was its proximity to Bay Street, the main street in Florence's Historic Old Town.

"Bay Street has a lot to offer to the tourists with great shops and restaurants. However, there is an interest in letting people know there are also great shops and restaurants on the streets nearby as well," he said. "The location for me was perfect. Off of Bay street but still close."

Off Bay Street Bistro is housed in a beautiful two-story building that has the feel more of a home than a restaurant. The décor is evocative of a European café and traditional jazz floats around the warm open interior space. Intriguing aromas waft from the open kitchen into the well-appointed dining

area. The work being done by the restaurant's chefs is a part of the visual entertainment afforded diners.

"The European feel to the restaurant is not by chance," Paul said. "Kim is from France and has helped with the decor. We also chose to do paninis, something Florence didn't have. Our weekly dinner specials are inspired by my southern background, as I'm from Florida, Kim's European background and other multicultural influences."

The menu at the Off Bay Street Bistro has some delicious breakfast and lunch items on the evolving menu, but one of the unique cooking techniques utilized at the bistro revolves round an always popular food, pizza.

"The wood burning brick oven was a plus. Meshing with our focus on fresh ingredients, we offer a nice European-style pizza. The closest brick oven pizza is in Reedsport or in Yachats. It is exciting to be able to offer one to Florence," Paul said.

# Nosh Eatery offers big flavor variety with small-plate menu

**STORY & PHOTO BY JARED ANDERSON SIUSLAW NEWS**



"Food is my passion for sure, but more than that, my passion is for taking care of people," Nosh Eatery owner Kady Sneddon said about her small-plate restaurant on Bay Street. "I want to feed people, nourish them, make them happy."

For Sneddon, there are multiple ways that small plate dining can bring happiness to diners.

"It's versatile," she said, pointing out that many of her customers aren't familiar with the concept. "They go, 'Oh, I was looking for a meat and potatoes type of deal.' You can get that here — you just have to order it in two or three smaller dishes."

For example, you can order the Nosh specialty meatloaf sliders and a side of parmesan French fries, a twist on the classic Americana fare. But why put on the limits? Instead of fries, what about zucchini fritters with ranch, or the balsamic roasted mushrooms and polenta? Or switch out the sliders with the root beer braised beef short rib.

"You can come in with eight people and order everything on the menu, trying a little bit of everything and having a real great time, or just maybe get a cup of tea and donut holes and just read your book," Sneddon said.

For the team at the restaurant, Nosh is a conversation between the diners and the kitchen. Sneddon and her crew offer what they love

about dining, and the diners get to discover that love on their own terms. It's a conversation about what makes food special.

"I do really think that's the sole reason for me buying the restaurant and operating it the way that I do," said Sneddon. "Yes, food is a passion for me, but I really love making sure the diners have this beautiful space to come to. We're all like this family, in a weird way."

Everyone is a restaurateur in a small plate diner, and the variety is limitless. But simply offering variety is not what Nosh is about.

"Honestly, I think a huge part is that we make everything from scratch," Sneddon explained. "When you come in and you're having this experience, if you're getting something that's well thought out and well planned, something we put love into, I think that's what it's about."

The Nosh aesthetic doesn't come from opening a heap of prepackaged food and putting it together in interesting ways.

"We have a lot of local partners and farms," she said. "It's just exciting to have someone come by every Tuesday with kale or squash that they picked from their garden that morning, and I get to play and be inspired by it."

Every week is an adventure in forming the fresh hauls into something delectable from scratch. "Then you're really proud of the product at the end. You've literally

made every aspect of it," said Sneddon.

The kitchen is constantly creating because of the fresh offerings. There's the daily specials, such as lobster rolls. "But a lot of new things are born out of the fun I have in the kitchen and go, 'This really works, it's a product that we can sell and people like it, so let's put it on the menu,'" Sneddon said.

This led to a one-time special that has become a house specialty — the mac and cheese, "scratch made to order with Tillamook Reserve sharp cheddar," upgrade to Rogue blue cheese optional."

Traditionalists can stick with the original, but the point of small plate dining is to branch out to the new. Diners can have their mac served with shredded beef short ribs, mushrooms and bacon, pork chili verde or even fried Brussels sprouts and sriracha.

And then there's the Brussels sprouts, sautéed with olive oil, garlic and butter.

"That's our number one seller," said Sneddon. "We have people who grew up hating Brussels sprouts come in here, and they'll only eat them when we make them."

It's that sense of discovery in which Nosh celebrates not just the perfectly made dishes that its diners eat, but the people who come through its doors.

"It's the love of food, camaraderie and fellowship," Sneddon said. "Just having that lovely time and bonding over pork chili verde."



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