

Defining the visitor experience



R.J. MARX/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Breakfast is served daily for guests of the Arch Cape Inn & Retreat.

Tucked away off the road in Arch Cape, up a slight hill and through a shaded drive stands the elegant and imposing Arch Cape Inn & Retreat. Its Tudor-style turrets form momentous castles in the air, brought down to earth by the full boughs of spruce bordering the property. It is in this glorious wonderland that visitors from around the world come to celebrate the North Coast experience.

Few people articulate it or bring it to life better than innkeeper Cynthia Malkowski and her husband, Stephen, a commercial airline pilot. The couple present a stage set for jet-setters and staycationers alike. Malkowski's passion for the visitor experience goes to extraordinary lengths.

It starts with breakfast.

"How proud I am of the culinary region I live in," Malkowski said. "We try to be the best ambassador for a culinary experience for people coming from all over the nation, all over the world."

Her philosophy was inspired by "Galloping Gourmet" Graham Kerr, a longtime friend and visitor to the inn: good, healthy food that satisfies the "neck-up experience."

"How do we do that in a healthy way that reflects our local culinary value and makes a roomful of very diverse people very happy, every single day?" Malkowski asked. "It should be incumbent on people to provide healthy food for their travelers. It will make everybody appreciate this area even more when they go home."

Most important is to keep every guest nourished and content, she said. When people are traveling, if they're not eating well, by Day 3 they'll feel irritable. "They'll assign that negative value to the lodging property that they're staying at," she said.

They may complain about the mattress, sleeplessness or lethargy.

Malkowski realized a portion of counteracting that is good nutrition. "I started thinking, gosh, I'd better start serving good food to people."

Malkowski's kitchen, under the hand of Sarah Oxford, is able to develop a core menu into a gluten-free, dairy free, egg-free or vegan experience. Kosher and halal servings are dramatically on the uptick.

No visitor should feel they are getting a "second-class meal," she said. "It's very impacting in a subliminal way when people don't feel they're part of this great experience."

While I was there, Oxford and Malkowski served the three-course breakfast, beginning with prosciutto-wrapped melon with asiago, honey and nuts.

That was followed by roasted vegetable hash, scrambled eggs with red pepper sausage, chicken sausage. The third course was mixed berry trifle.

And they do this every day, 10 tables, 20 people. "It has to be something that makes everybody happy from the Midwest to Amsterdam," Malkowski said.

Oxford, of Astoria, worked for Drina Daisy Bosnian Restaurant for five years before joining forces with Malkowski five years ago.

"We get a lot of different food restrictions: gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, paleo — all kinds of things," Oxford said. "We try to have core menus and make them so they match

CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



R.J. MARX/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Second course for breakfast: Roasted pepper hash, scrambled eggs with red pepper sauce, chicken sausage and dressed greens.

everybody's needs."

"Her natural creativity is amazing," Malkowski said. "Sarah gets in there and it's like, 'Ohmygosh how did you think of that?'"

Everything is prepared and ready to serve by 9 a.m., Oxford said.

Staff includes Malkowski, Oxford, Kim Johnson and Stormy Johnson. Owen Cullen — aka "Owen from Dublin" — maintains the grounds.

Guests have been coming to this location since its founding in 1994 as St. Bernard's, a bed and breakfast.

The Malkowskis became the third owners in 2008.

"I thought, what can I do to try to contribute to an awareness of people understanding this land that I love so much, in a way that they could see it through my eyes? How can I share that?" Malkowski said.

As a first endeavor, she considered a campground idea featuring guided hikes, but soon shifted gears. The Oregon Coast and nearby Arch Cape were a natural destination. She narrowed the focus to become an adult romantic special occasion destination. She got the word out by working with the "change agents" in the community.

It worked. "The power brokers from all over come here and it's a beautiful thing," Malkowski said.

Even in the recession, when people weren't spending money, they were still spending money on that special occasion," Malkowski said. "Birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, we kind of by God's grace sailed through."

For several years, the inn was known as a "secret" five-star dining destination, and there is talk of starting up an evening menu again.

Along with the spectacular breakfast, the daily wine social from 3 to 6 p.m. "This place is party in the box, every day at 4 p.m.," Malkowski said. "We do beautiful appetizers, wine — and I get to share my story every night with people from all over the country."

Today, Stephen Malkowski handles business management and Cynthia Malkowski the inn's administrative and marketing aspects. And everyone who walks through their door is greeted as a friend.

"That's our product: People want to be known, they want to be heard and they want to be loved on," Cynthia Malkowski said. "And that's what we do."

Working my way toward somm level 3

If you've been reading this column, you know I passed my Wine and Spirits Education Trust Sommelier Level 2 (intermediate) exam "with merit" about a year ago and against my better judgment, I decided to pursue my somm level 3 (advanced) certification. While I know a lot of wine aficionados, I'm not aware of anyone on the Oregon Coast being a WSET Level 2 or Level 3 Sommelier.

There were 15 of us — two from Oregon, 13 from Washington — who freely gave up Saturdays and Sundays over an eight-week period to attend wine classes at the Northwest Wine Academy in South Seattle this spring. In addition to studying the world's major wine regions, we studied viticulture (grape growing)

and enology (winemaking). We also tasted and systematically analyzed about 100 wines corresponding to the wine regions being discussed.

I took the three-part exam on April 30 in Seattle. The exam's first part is the blind tasting wine analysis of two wines, an unknown white, followed by an unknown red. WSET has created a very specific process for analyzing wine and in order to pass this section, you have to following their process. If you've seen the movie "Somm," you get the general idea of how this exam section goes, with the biggest differences being that we aren't required to identify the wine and its region. Instead, to pass at this level, you must nail the wine's aromas and flavors, as well as its alcohol, body, acid and tannin levels. Of the exam's three sections, this is the easiest. For those of you wondering, I identified the two wines as an Alsatian Gewürztraminer and a Bordeaux blend from Pauillac.

After the blind tasting was completed, we moved to the exam's theory section, which consists of 50 multiple choice questions and four essay questions. I opened my testing book and stared at multiple choice question No. 1 and had no clue what the answer was. What a great start! I circled it and moved on. After my first pass at the 50 questions, I had circled seven, answered the other 43, and was pretty sure I'd pass this section of the exam. Of course, I went back and worked through the circled questions, some with more systematic reasoning ... this hot climate grape has lower acid levels, so the answer is "b," while other questions received the "eenie-meenie-miney-mo" reasoning. Either way, I worked through this section in about 45 minutes, which left a little more than an hour for the four essay questions. Worldwide, the WSET Level 3 exam has about a 50 percent pass rate. Most students who stumble do so in the essay section; I was about to learn why.

I opened the essay exam booklet and found a question about Aglianico waiting for me. What is Aglianico you ask? It's a red grape, from Southern Italy and very few people drink it, because Sangiovese (Chianti) and Nebbiolo (Barolo and Barbaresco) make better wine and thus, get all of the attention. So, I proceeded to write an essay answer around the only things I knew about Aglianico: (1) it's a red grape, (2) from Southern Italy and (3) nobody drinks it. We'll see how many points I get from that.

There was a question asking us to discuss why a bottle of Dom Perignon is so expensive and a question asking us to explain the difference between two sweet wines (one was botrytized and the other was a late harvest). I felt pretty good about my answers on those questions and moved on. The final essay question asked us about Argentina's signature white grape, Torrontes. We needed to discuss this grape's two growing subregions, Uco Valley and Maipu. I was ready for this! I had taken the week off and had done my final studies, which included Uco Valley and Maipu! I diligently began writing about how the differences in vineyard locations, climate and terrain impacted the aromas and flavors of Torrontes. I finished up the essay questions, handed in my exam booklet and left feeling pretty confident. As I began my drive back to Cannon Beach, I called Maryann and told her the exam went well and that although it was tough, I thought I'd pass. That didn't last long.

I stopped for a late lunch and brought my study binder into the restaurant. While eating, I looked through it to double check my answers to questions I could remember. And then I saw it, Uco Valley isn't in a valley at all, it's in the foothills of the Andes and Maipu isn't in the mountains, it's in a valley. Oh no ... I flip-flopped these two regions! The beautiful answer I wrote describing Maipu was actually about Uco Valley and vice versa. I suddenly lost my appetite and felt a wave of nausea come over me. Instead of passing the essay questions with room to spare, I now find myself scrambling to put enough points together to pass.

I won't get my results until sometime in July, but I'm not waiting around. I've already tuned up my study guide and started hitting the books. The WSET Level 3 exam is being offered again in December. If necessary, I'm going to ace it.

UNCORKED RAMBLINGS

STEVEN SINKLER



Wright named COO of EO Media Group

EO Media Group

SALEM — Heidi Wright has been named chief operating officer of EO Media Group, which owns The Daily Astorian.

Wright succeeds John S. Perry, who is retiring after 44 years in the newspaper industry, including the last 12 with EO Media Group.

Wright comes to EO Media Group from Western Communications, owner of the Bend Bulletin and other newspapers in Oregon and California. She is Wescom's chief financial officer and human resources director. She will join EO Media Group in June.

Steve Forrester, the president and CEO of EO Media Group, announced Wright's hiring: "Our



Heidi Wright

prosper in the digital age. Her prior experience with family-owned companies in our region is especially relevant."

Prior to joining Wescom, Wright was publisher of the Klamath Falls Herald and News, owned by Pioneer News Group. She also worked as a publisher in Montana for Lee Enterprises. As chief operating officer, Wright will direct the business operations of EO Media Group and

supervise publishers and corporate staff. The company's headquarters are in Salem.

"It's an honor and privilege to be joining EO Media Group," said Wright. "While I will miss my friends and colleagues at Western Communications, I am excited to become a part of the EO Media Group family. My husband, Richard Schuurman, and I are looking forward to calling Salem home in the near future."

EO Media Group publications include The Cannon Beach Gazette, The Blue Mountain Eagle of John Day, Capital Press, Chinook Observer, Coast River Business Journal, The Daily Astorian, East Oregonian, Hermiston Herald, Oregon Coast Today, Seaside Signal and Wallowa County Chieftain.

LETTERS

Rant of the day

Wow, government at its best.

I attended a Cannon Beach City Council workshop last night on downtown parking. The discussion was to implement a time limit on parking in downtown Cannon Beach. A city employee, not the firm that did the study, gave a report on a study to the council. He gave the report with his back to the audience; none of us could hear him. I motion to the mayor that we could not hear what was being said, but I was ignored. Pretty much everything that was discussed was said so softly most all of us could not hear. Actually the keyboard typing of the secretary was louder than their voices at times.

As it turned out, they decided to start by Memorial Day weekend with a three hour parking time limit on Hemlock. Not sure about the other streets, I

don't think they addressed that. What is unbelievable to me is that, I know work sessions are between the council members, but I would think at some point there would be public discussion. So I asked after they were moving on to another subject, they indicated at some point they would check with businesses. Well, not sure what that means when they already decided to start it?

It also amazes me that I believe they paid for a study on this issue, but the person that did the study did not talk with any businesses that I know of. I would think that would be a high priority in a study of parking in a business area. Love government that thinks it knows better about what to do than the businesses that rely on that parking for their survival.

Thanks for letting me rant.

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