

Chef lets faith guide him

What does the Christian culinary experience mean?

Those in the food service industry often aren't very patient, said Ira Krizo, director of the Christian Culinary Academy in Cannon Beach. "They're not always very kind, not always very loving to each other," he said. "Many times they are in it for themselves."

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



God calls Christians to be loving, patient and kind, he said.

His counter to a tense industry? "Our school is for Christians because it is built on discipleship, how to become confident in your faith and your culinary skills in the industry," Krizo said.

'You are not a pilot'

Krizo grew up on the border of California and Oregon, a mile from the small town of Tule Lake, on his family's horseradish and barley farm.

To overcome shyness, he took public speaking courses and joined the Future Business Leaders of America in high school. He was also deathly afraid of heights, so he conquered that by attending aeronautical school.

"When I was young, I was really shy and it was hard for me to talk to anyone," Krizo said. "One thing that I've always had is drive. If I have any challenges, that becomes my main focus, not in a negative way, but in a positive way."

After graduating, he went to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona, to become a commercial airline pilot. A side job waiting tables sidetracked his flight career after he accepted a job as a cook at the Sheraton resort in Prescott.

While he had difficult moments — the sous-chef didn't like him much and sometimes Krizo got knives thrown at him — the industry grew on him. "I kept finding I had much more passion for the cooking and not as much for the flying," he said. "Basically, God said, 'You are not a pilot.'"

Krizo attended The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, where he learned being a chef was a career, not just a job.

He studied in Paris and worked at premier Italian restaurants in Sydney, Australia, before returning to the United States as lead line cook at a Bertrand's, a fine dining French restaurant in San Diego.

Krizo started Christian Chefs International in 1998, developing a curriculum and teaching culinary arts for what would become a lifetime of instruction.

Krizo owned the Pinehurst Inn and White Pine Restaurant, a fine-dining bed-and-



TOP: Chef Ira Krizo runs the Christian Culinary Academy in Cannon Beach. ABOVE: Student chefs stand with Krizo.

R.J. Marx photos

breakfast southeast of Ashland. "We got all sorts of great reviews, newspaper articles, but the lease came up and it wasn't viable to purchase it," he said.

He joined a large catering company in Portland, Catering at Its Best, as head chef. But throughout, Krizo believed his end goal would be a culinary school.

"I believe that God has spoken to me many times. One of the times, it was so clear it might as well have been an audible voice," Krizo said. "I knew that I was going one day to be a part of something like that to train others."

Faith-based cooking

He responded to an invitation to relocate to the North Coast in 2013 and started the Christian Culinary Academy. "The door

opened up to come here, and here we are," Krizo said.

He rents the facility from the Christian Conference Center.

"It is not a Bible college-seminary culinary school," Krizo said. "It is a culinary school preparing students to be professionals in the industry that they're called to. Many students go into fine dining."

The program features a classical curriculum, with the participation of "The Galloping Gourmet" Graham Kerr and global master chef Karl Guggenmos on the school's advisory board.

"We start off with knife skills and we get into soups, stocks, sauces and then cooking methods of different proteins, meat, fish, poultry, seafood, vegetables, starches ... we get into salads, appetizers and desserts and

breads," Krizo said.

Guest instructors come from restaurants along the coast or fly in from other locations. "Today we had chef Tyler Benson," Krizo said. "He actually spent quite a bit of time in Sri Lanka."

While most students come from the West, aspiring chefs come from throughout the United States and the school is approved to accept international students. Most culinary schools operate five hours a day, five days a week. The academy is five days a week, eight hours a day, enabling students to fill a two-year curriculum into a one-year program.

Many graduates go on to Christian conference centers, Krizo said. Local restaurants who have hired graduates include the Stephanie Inn, the Wayfarer, Sea Level Bakery + Coffee and Dough Dough Bakery. Nationally, students from this year's graduating class are headed to the Glen Eyrie Castle in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the Scott River Lodge in Fort Jones, California, and The Crooked Ram in Manchester, Vermont, among other destinations.

Krizo and his wife, Abby, live with their two boys, Jonathan, 16, and Samuel, 11, in Seaside. They met in Cannon Beach when she was working as business manager at the Ecola Bible College.

Cooking amid the pandemic

During the pandemic, career colleges were considered essential, Krizo said, and the academy did not get shut down.

"When COVID-19 hit a year ago, one of the things that kept me up all night was what can we do to not be a circumstance of what's going on, but what can we do to make a difference," he said.

Students made hundreds of loaves daily, distributing them to food banks. When their annual chef's dinner, typically held in the institute's dining room, was canceled due to the pandemic, they pivoted to takeout from Cafe Dieu, with food prepared by student chefs and available from the North Coast Family Fellowship in Seaside.

"The only thing the pandemic changed for us is that it opened the door for us to be more of a support to the community through producing food for the food bank and blessing the community with our Cafe Dieu takeout events," he said. "With how well those have been received, we plan to continue both of those after the pandemic is over."

Before a recent dinner, reservations were filled a week ahead of time. A waiting list filled up and the academy's student chefs served 150 guests.

Krizo is looking forward to fall. "We are excited about all the applications that have already come in," he said. There are still some spaces left.

"This is what I've always wanted to do," Krizo said. "Now that I'm doing it, I always want to get better. There's always room for improvement."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trash pileups should be addressed

We are tourists visiting Seaside and what a lovely place it could be. Except for the heat wave, the mild weather is much enjoyed. We were dismayed to see all the trash in the streets and on the beach. If there are cleanup efforts, we have not seen that, but perhaps the city can help out.

Put more trash containers on corners. How about more benches for the elderly? More incentives for businesses to clean up their areas.

We went fishing off one of the bridges and all we caught were plastic bottles. It is difficult to recommend this area under these circumstances, it has so much potential for tourism.

**Vick Thorson
Tucson, Arizona**

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

TUESDAY, July 6

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., 1225 Avenue A.

Seaside Library Board of Directors, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway St.

WEDNESDAY, July 7

Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., www.cityof-gearhart.com.

THURSDAY, July 8

Seaside Civic and Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave.

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

All about the story for new Seaside librarian

By **R.J. MARX**
Seaside Signal

After 27 years, Leah Griffith retired from her role as Newberg library director in 2019 and returned to Seaside, her hometown. She hopes to breathe new life into the Seaside Museum & Historical Society's library collection.

Griffith has begun with revisions to the collection, getting rid of out-of-area materials readily available on the internet or through library loan. She and Steve Wright, the museum's board president and city councilor, plan on meeting with members of the Clatsop County Historical Society to discuss digital preservation of much of the museum's archives, including years of city directories.

Once the paper versions are gone, she said, they cannot be replaced.

Griffith's roots in Seaside go back more than a century.

"My family's been here since about 1910," Griffith said during a recent museum tour. "My grandfather was the police chief in 1933 to 1953, and dad was on City Council. He was a firefighter. I have two chairs from the lounge area of the fire department on Broadway. They're now in my living room."

Griffith is a Rotarian and chairwoman of the board of directors for the Seaside Public Library Foundation.

"We've got a good base," Griffith said of the museum's library collection. "It's had a lot of support over the years and we're now ready to work on some new exhibits. We've developed a committee that's going to plan out our exhibits into the future so that we know the story that we want to tell. That's what it's all about — the story."



Leah Griffith is the new librarian for the Seaside Museum & Historical Society.

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