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COOS BAY'S FOOD SCENE

BY TRACY BEARD

IMAGINE THE AROMA of cheesy pizza, the crispy crunch of fish and chips or the sight of steamy clam chowder on a cold, rainy day. These dishes represent traditional seaside fare. Although delicious, today's diners are also interested in healthy meals made with local, sustainable ingredients. People are more conscientious about the origin of their food and how its production affects the world, and some are seeking a more refined cuisine.

Chefs, bakers and pub cooks in Coos Bay, Oregon, have spent the last few years raising the bar on local eats. They are working together to increase the level of excellence by seeking the best local ingredients and creating tempting, innovative dishes that generate success for the entire culinary community. Several establishments are buying and selling products from one another, collaborating to stimulate additional economic growth.

Carmen Matthews, the owner of 7 Devils Brewing Co., strives to be a good neighbor. He says, "We try to complement the businesses in our immediate area as opposed to duplicating what already exists. Burgers are served within walking distance of the brewery; therefore, they are not on the menu at 7 Devils. If anyone wants a burger, we direct them to the place nearby, which helps everyone find a niche while simultaneously supporting each other."

Carmen recently opened his new restaurant, 7 Devils Waterfront Ale House. He plans to expand his current menu, including burgers, and take it up a notch or two. The new restaurant features fireside dining, a 30-foot-long bar and plenty of tables. He says, "Every seat has a view of the bay!"

Carmen sells spent barley to John and Tara Moore, the owners of Wildflour Café & Catering. John uses the barley to bake soft pretzels and then sells them to Carmen for the brewery. Tara's sweet and savory grazing boards are local favorites. Her dark chocolate cupcakes with raspberry buttercream frosting are moist and flavorful.

Chef Chanupa Uha Manee at Front Street Provisioners offers 7 Devils beer as a beverage option along with several cocktails. Chef Chanupa creates an eclectic array of food, including original wood-fired pizzas, fresh poke nachos and several unique desserts.

Many restaurants purchase goods from nearby farms and the seasonal Wednesday Farmers Market. Paula Holmes buys local produce for her vegan restaurant, The Tin Thistle Café. Her village burgers made with oats, walnuts, spices and more would satisfy any meat lover, and the roasted cauliflower tacos are colorful and



yummy. The cheese-free mac and cheese made with nutritional yeast wins the vegan comfort food award. Shark Bites sells excellent fish tacos that contend with the best in Mexico.

All restaurants at The Mill Casino Hotel & RV Park are under the direction of Chef Roberto Pedrini. He demonstrates his high-end culinary skills at The Plank House overlooking the bay with scrumptious seafood and mouthwatering steaks—be sure to leave room for his famous peanut butter pie.

Chef Eoghain O'Neill at Restaurant O caters to every palate. He prepares tapas for the bar, bistro cuisine in front of the open kitchen and a customizable tasting menu for upstairs. Tell him your preferences, and your dinner will reflect your likes and dislikes. Chef O'Neill has a Michelin star from his previous restaurant in Europe, and his cocktails and cuisine showcase his expertise.

Restaurants in Coos Bay still offer traditional seaside fare, but foodies and conscientious diners will be thrilled with the upgrades to local cuisine.

Learn more about Coos Bay cuisine and plan your stay at oregonsadventurecoast.com. 🍷