



By Tracy Beard

PROVISIONS

ALONG THE TRAIL
& ON YOUR PATIO!

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Tracy's Shrimp Verde Enchiladas

Enchiladas are a great make-ahead dish for summer parties.

Ingredients:

8 ounces raw shrimp, peeled, deveined and chopped
½ Tbl. butter
½ cup onion - chopped
1 clove garlic - minced
1/2 tsp taco seasoning mixed with 1 Tbl water
Salt and pepper to taste
6 taco-size flour tortillas
5 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
4 ounces Monterey jack cheese, shredded
1-½ cups salsa verde sauce (I like the Safeway brand, or you can make your own.
Avocado and sour cream for garnish

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Melt butter in a saucepan and add onions and saute until transparent. Add the shrimp, garlic and salt and pepper. Cook 3 minutes.

Place ½ cup salsa verde in the bottom of a baking dish. Mix half of the mozzarella and Monterey jack in with the shrimp mix. Heat the tortillas in the microwave to soften for 15 seconds each.

Take one tortilla at a time and fill with 1/6th of the shrimp mix. Roll and place in baking dish. Repeat with the remaining tortillas. Top with the rest of the Verde sauce and then with the remaining cheeses. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until the cheese is bubbly. Garnish with avocado slices and sour cream.

LA CENTER, WASHINGTON

Delve into a day of delights

Story & photos by Tracy Beard

My friend BJ has lived in La Center for many years. As a resident, she knows all the fun things to do, exciting places to visit and the best food to eat. Follow me as I journey through her recommendations in this unassuming yet charming township in Clark County.

Kick-starting the day

My daughter Brittney and I arrived at Sadie and Josie's Bakery around 9am. The shelves stood lined with decadent donuts, fresh-baked loaves of bread, sweet pastries and assorted cookies and candies. Due to recent Covid issues, everything is boxed and ready for purchase. We bought shortbread cookies and peanut butter balls and headed over to Stonehill Coffee House. Eric Stenberg, the owner, made us a couple of crême brûlée coffees with caramel and French vanilla flavors. He unlocked the chairs on



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the front lawn, and we sat outside to enjoy our morning java with the sweets from the bakery. Raring to go after some caffeine and sugar, we drove to the corner of Fourth and Stonecreek, where we began our hike on the Brezee Creek Trail.

Exploring on Foot

The trail is named after one of La Center's early settlers, Andrew Brezee. The trail travels 0.71 miles to East 14th Circle. Although steeper than expected, several benches provide rest stops along the way. Alix Firl, an Eagle Scout, built the benches. The Heritage Park Trail connects to the Brezee Trail and leads downtown and to the local schools.

After finishing the short trek, we headed back into the center of town near the roundabout and parked in front of Sternwheeler Park (Note: Upcoming free concerts, Saturdays, 6-8pm: Aug 21 Blake Johnston; Aug 28 Fortunate Gold tribute to CCR & Neil Young). The path is just to the right of the park's sign and leads down to a lush area with stunning carvings. Shaded picnic tables and large wooden carvings make this an interesting stop for a snack. We continued down the trail to a lovely pavilion and amphitheater with seating carved into the hillside. Brittney and I decided that this place would make a stunning spot for a small outdoor wedding.

The trail continues south to the La Center Bottoms, a county-owned stewardship site consisting of wetlands, flood plains, forested uplands and a shoreline that runs alongside the East Fork Lewis River. The area is one of three watchable wildlife sites in the county, and it spans 314 acres. Visitors can learn from the interpretive signs, view wildlife from specially designed blinds, meander the 8-foot-wide walking trail and possibly spy coyotes, otters and migratory waterfowl.



Discovering More Fun

La Center boasts four card rooms, all located near the town's roundabout. In the summer, fruit stands line the roadside near the bridge, and Bar UK River Ranch Camp & Ride offers kayaking, camping and horseback riding.

Cooling Down

After hiking The Bottoms and strolling around town, we went into the El Rancho Viejo Mexican Restaurant and cooled

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LaCenter

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off with a tasty Cadillac margarita. Refreshed, we walked over to The Trellis gift shop. This eclectic shop boasts a variety of interior and exterior decorations, plants, jewelry and more.

Divulging the Past

The 4th Street Bar and Grill opens at 4pm. BJ said this was an excellent place for dinner and drinks. Inside, we met Anthony Sharrah, owner of both The Trellis gift shop and the bar and grill. He has owned The Trellis for 16 years and purchased the bar and grill just short of seven years ago. Working at The Trellis, he had watched the bar go through four different owners. One day, he realized that he should buy it. He set out to gentrify the building and created a menu that featured his favorite scratch-made dishes and hand-crafted specialty cocktails, emphasizing a few classically made Prohibition drinks.

Over the last six and a half years, Anthony has worked hard to improve the 107-year-old building that houses 4th Street Bar and Grill. The building has always harbored a bar. Aside from replacing the necessary plumbing, electrical, and flooring, he has added ceiling fans and a fireplace on the back patio and recently replaced the bar tops with wider ones. This way, guests can enjoy drinks and dinner at the bar without being crowded or spilling on their laps. Anthony upgraded and reinforced the back bar with columns and shelves that enhance the mirror.

Anthony said he heard about the back bar from a patron. The story goes that the back bar came from an old tavern. This tavern was the first stop for those coming up the river. Gentlemen that frequented this tavern were in the habit of tossing a coin onto the top of the back bar for good luck. Eventually, the weight of the coins caused the top of the back bar to sag. One night, the building caught fire, and the only thing salvaged was the back bar. Anthony said he wasn't sure if the coins were used as a down payment for the new bar at its current location or if they were enough to purchase the entire building.

Dining and Drinking

Chef Tim operates the kitchen, and Tracie, the alcohol control coordinator and chief bartender, manages the bar. We didn't meet Tim, but Tracie was warm and funny and her cocktails were top-notch. We started with a couple



of cocktails (*above, right*). I had the Old Fashioned made with Knob Creek Kentucky bourbon, and it was spot on. Brittney tried "The Last Word," a gin-based Prohibition-era cocktail originally developed at the Detroit Athletic Club by Frank Fogarty. Traditionally, this drink is made with one part gin, one part green chartreuse (a rich botanical spirit with approximately 128 different herbs made by French monks), one part lime juice, and one part Maraschino liqueur. It is shaken with ice and strained into a coupe glass. The Last Word is sweet and herbaceous with an appealing scent, an appetizing light green hue and a refreshing taste.

Anthony recommended the Caprese salad made with orange and red heirloom tomatoes and the Reuben sandwich with meat marinated in their six-year-old marinade. It's like a sourdough starter that gets better with time. The slow-roasted corned beef melts in your mouth and is served on toasted rye bread with housemade sauerkraut and special sauce. The sandwich was delicious, and we paired it with crispy garlic parmesan fries. The menu has numerous scrumptious options, and there are always one or two nightly specials. Anthony informed us about the locals' secret menu that included street tacos and other yummy plates. We ordered the "off the menu" steak bites with a caramelized onion and blue cheese sauce



and a wedge salad. It was amazing. The food at 4th Street Bar and Grill is solid! Everything we had was expertly executed and tasted fantastic.

La Center may be small, but there are plenty of fun ways to spend a day. Become a visitor near your own hometown and explore La Center and other lesser-known towns in the area.

Directions: I-5 Exit 16 to La Center, or 6.7 miles south from Woodland on NW Pacific Highway.

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