



By Tracy Beard

PROVISIONS

ALONG THE TRAIL & ON YOUR PATIO!

Tuaca Lemon Drop

My favorite summer cocktail!

- 2 Tbl. granulated sugar
- ½ ounce sweet and sour mix
- 1-¾ ounces Tuaca
- 1 ounce Cointreau
- ¾ ounce fresh lemon juice
- 1 lemon wedge

Rub lemon wedge along the rim of a martini glass. Place sugar on a plate. Dip wet rim in the sugar and set it aside. Put ice in a cocktail shaker. Add sweet and sour, Tuaca, Cointreau and lemon juice. Shake 25 times. Strain into the sugar-rimmed glass.

Note: Tuaca is a sweet, golden brown liqueur originally produced in Italy. Its ingredients include brandy, citrus essences, vanilla, and other spices.



Summer Steak and Peach Salad

STEAK

- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1-½ sprigs rosemary
- 1 6-ounce New York strip steak

DRESSING

- 4 ounces blue cheese
- 3 Tbl. sour cream
- ½ Tbl. lemon juice
- ½ Tbl. red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh chives

Salt and pepper to taste

SALAD

- 1 peach, peeled and halved
- 2 cups of salad greens
- 1 Tbl. chopped fresh chives
- 1-½ Tbl. thinly-sliced fresh basil



Heat the olive oil and rosemary in a small pan over low heat for 8 minutes. Let cool. Place steak in a plastic bag and pour in the oil. Marinate in the refrigerator overnight.

Place all dressing ingredients into a food processor and blend until smooth. Grill the steak to your liking. Tent with foil and set aside for 10 minutes. Drizzle both sides of the peach halves with olive oil. Place on a hot grill for one or two minutes on each side to generate grill marks. Remove from heat.

Place greens in two bowls or on two plates. Dress the greens, then slice steak and peach and divide between the plates.

•••



A Summer Stroll in Whipple Creek Park

Hidden gem near Ridgefield offers woodsy ramble, wildflowers

Story & photos by Tracy Beard

I am always excited to discover new trails close to home. Karla Dudley, a longtime friend of Columbia River Reader, suggested Whipple Creek Park for a possible “Out and About” visit. The park, with its 4.3 miles of trails, is open to walkers, runners, hikers, dogs, equestrians and mountain bikers. Several well-signed loops make up the trail mileage within the 300-acre regional park located off Northwest 179th Street in Ridgefield west of the Clark County Fairgrounds.

Over the past 11 years, the Whipple Creek Restoration Committee and several volunteers have spent more than 8,500 hours repairing and restoring the trails. Currently, the park is fully open. However, in the past, Clark County Parks has posted signs closing specific paths to everything other than foot traffic due to muddy conditions.

The most accessible entry point to the trails is from the large parking lot located at 17202 Northwest 21st Avenue (I-5 south, Exit 9 onto NE 179th Ave, left onto NW 21st Ave). The lot has plenty of room for both cars and vehicles towing horse trailers or mountain bikes. A clean portable toilet is on the east side of the lot. The majority of the trails are under tree cover, offering visitors a gloriously cool environment on a hot summer day.

Decide your route

To begin your hike, head south on the gravel trail. Look left to get your bearings from the extensive trail map posted on the left side near the trailhead. All routes are well maintained. I have hiked here in both the early and late spring, and there is an ever-changing array of colors and foliage. When plotting your trip, you can either meander around the loops or get the most mileage without backtracking on the same path by making the first left onto the North-South trail heading south. Cross a small wooden bridge, then turn left at Everson’s Cutoff trail. The hike is not strenuous, but it is not flat. Most of the course consists of gently rolling terrain with a few short steep inclines and declines.

Along Everson’s Cutoff trail I spotted several Pacific Trillium in the early spring. This plant, discovered by the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1806, is part of the lily family. These flowers begin as a soft shade of white and evolve into a light pink as they age. The flowers bloom from early spring into the summer. Along this trail you can see a large field with numerous resident horses wandering about or lounging in the sun. The path leads downhill from here until you connect with the Stone Mill Loop. Before you reach the other main path that enters the park from the south entrance on 21st Avenue, you will pass an old cinder-block building known as Hillborn’s Stone Mill. After passing the 21st Avenue entrance the trail climbs upward, and you begin heading north.

If you feel adventurous, take the rugged Springboard Hill or Gazebo trail for a short trip out to Castle’s Gazebo. Return the same way and reconnect with the northbound Stone Mill Loop trail that will soon connect with the South Ridge Loop. Make a left and head west. If you would like to continue extending your exploration, there are several smaller trails inside this loop. The park is home to a variety of birds and animals. People have spotted woodpeckers, hawks, flying squirrels, beavers, deer and herons in the vicinity.

Salmonberry bushes grow throughout the trail system, so if you visit in the summer you might find a few ripe berries and enjoy a snack. Salmonberries resemble the typical

raspberry, although they are far blander in taste. The pathways are predominantly root-free, allowing visitors to view the beauty above as well as checking out what grows near their feet. Stream violets produce a bright yellow flower on the forest floor that sings out for attention against the Pacific waterleaf, vanilla-leaf and other various



green plants found in the forest.

Once you reach the top of the South Ridge Loop, you can choose to head back on the north side of this loop or cut over to the North Ridge Way and Cedar Loops. Both options continue through the forest, but if you take the Cedar Loop, you will end your journey on a section that travels through a large, grassy field with no tree cover. My route covers approximately 2.5 to 3.0 miles and takes about one hour at a relaxed pace. You can stretch out your trip by backtracking and looping through the smaller trails within the system to cover the entire 4.3 miles.

Whipple Creek Park is a great find. Pack a lunch and plan to spend some time enjoying this hidden gem in Ridgefield.

•••



Wildflowers, from top: Pacific Waterleaf, Salmon berry, Stream violet, Vanilla-leaf.

Vancouver, Wash. resident Tracy Beard writes about luxury and adventure travel, traditional and trendy fine dining and libations for regional, national and international magazines. She is CRR’s “Out & About” columnist, now in her sixth year.

