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Young downtown urbanites are curing bacon, churning butter, keeping beehives, planting blueberry bushes in their windows.

Sunshine Coast Dining Report

by Janet Collins



One of the joys of spending time on the Sunshine Coast is having so many opportunities to taste the best of the coastal lifestyle. Kayaking, diving, and sailing opportunities abound. And few things beat a picnic on the rocks overlooking the dramatic waters of Shookumchuck Narrows or the calmer currents of Sechelt Inlet as viewed from the forested shores of Porpoise Bay Provincial Park.

But as fall and winter brings it's cooler and wetter weather, along with it comes the need to retreat to more sheltered, indoor venues in which to eat "out". Luckily the sheltered coastal communities along Georgia Strait and Porpoise Bay also provide a scenic setting for some of the Sunshine Coast's best dining opportunities.

The recently opened **Restaurant at Painted Boat in Pender Harbour** forms a case in point.

The Painted Boat resort is setting a new standard for recreational communities along the Sunshine Coast. In addition to serving up a unique range of amenities including a 60-slip deep-water marina and five-star resort spa, the 31 condo-style units on the property are available to a wide range of potential purchasers through sales of fractional (1/4 share) ownership - a new purchasing option on the Coast. But the draw for local foodies and investors alike is doubtless The Restaurant at Painted Boat.

Everything about The Restaurant is clean and fresh. The décor is simple and straightforward. "We didn't need adornment inside," says **Dana Brash, Mobius Architecture's** interior design expert. "We 'invited' the environment inside through the use of complimentary colours and materials." As a result, natural elements such as wood and stone dominate the materials palette. Nowhere is that more apparent than on warm days when dining on the outside deck overlooking the marina and the surrounding waters of Pender Harbour is an option.

The décor echoes Executive Chef **David Cox's** vibrant yet unpretentious menu. While working at Calgary's **Muse Restaurant and Lounge**, and **Divino Wine and Cheese Bistro**, Cox honed his skills to create what he called "a distinctive Rocky Mountain style. I was trained in French cooking techniques," Cox continues, "but I lighten things. I don't use as much butter as in traditional French cuisine and I use the freshest of local ingredients to create something nutritious and uniquely flavourful."

At Painted Boat, local organic ingredients (many farmed or grown wild on the Sunshine Coast) are sourced whenever possible and cooked in a simple, straightforward manner. As a result, the subtle flavour of halibut, served with locally grown tomato/cucumber salad and coriander relish, is accentuated by the condiments rather than smothered by it. Similarly, in the gem lettuce salad, it is actually possible to distinguish the flavour of the spring peas from the Salt Spring Island chevre that surrounds them. Personally, I'm willing to attempt making a meal out of the verbena and thyme crème brûlée.

The Restaurant at Painted Boat is owned and operated by **Canadian Rocky Mountain Resorts (CRMR)**, a Calgary-based company that boasts three mountain lodges, four restaurants, a wine boutique, a bakery, and a game farm. So it should come as no

surprise that CRMR's beverage experience will also be in evidence at Painted Boat. *Wine Spectator* magazine has acknowledged CRMR's four Calgary restaurants with an impressive 22 awards. "At Painted Boat, we'll have a concentration of BC wines," says Schmidt, "but we'll also pull from [CRMR sommelier] **Brad Royale's** list as well."

The Restaurant at Painted Boat is open for lunch and dinner only. 1-604-883-2456. www.paintedboat.com/sunshine-coast.html

Of course, one restaurant does not a culinary destination make and there are other options worth investigating.

The **Rockwater Secret Cove Resort** has also added to the Coast's dining cache with the arrival of chef **Steven Ewing**, who recently served as interim chef at Vancouver's **Raincity Grill**, and who has also done stints at the world-renowned **French Laundry** in Napa Valley. The cauliflower puree soup with white truffle oil is among my favourite of his dishes as is the applewood smoked pork tenderloin. For weekend dining, the Rockwater's brunch menu has acquired the big local following. 5356 *Ole's Cove Rd., Halfmoon Bay*. 1-604-885-7038. www.rockwatersecretcovesort.com/

Those lamenting the loss of the old Wakefield Inn can satisfy their bi-valve cravings at **Smitty's Oyster House** in Gibsons. Located at dock level next to the landmark **Molly's Reach**, Smitty's serves up all things seafood. Best seat in the house? In summer it's the massive dock-side picnic table for lunch, dinner and pub grub along the likes of DIY fish tacos, clam burgers, crab ravioli, chowder and more. Barbecue fans will also find plenty that appeals, including my faves Thai-marinated halibut grilled in a banana leaf or the BBQ Oyster Combo. 643 *School Road Wharf, Gibsons*. 604-886-4665. www.smittysoysterhouse.com

As for beverage offerings, the Sunshine Coast has its share of notable watering hole destinations, too. **Haus Uropa** is one destination wine lovers will want to take in. Located across the road from the **Gibsons Marina**, this restaurant's wine list has garnered a bronze award from the Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival for the third consecutive year. Taking part in one of the restaurant's tastings is a great way to explore the list - and learn about the wines. 426 *Gower Point Road, Gibsons*. 1-604-886-832. www.hausuroparestaurant.com

In other Sunshine Coast dining news: **Bonniebrook Lodge** will soon be opening the much anticipated **Chasters** dining lounge with a nice view of the waterfront. 1532 *Ocean Beach Esplanade, Gibsons*. www.bonniebrook.com 1-877-290-9916

Former owners of the popular **Old Boot Eatery** in Sechelt have given Gibsons a taste of Italian, thanks to their newly opened **Sita's Spag Shack**. Best place to twirl spaghetti while taking in the views of Howe Sound. 546 *Gibsons Way, Gibsons*. 1-604-886-7721. www.sitas.ca

Finally, last but not least, **The Lighthouse Pub** has expanded its indoor dining space in addition to an extension for its popular waterfront deck. 5764 *Wharf Road, Sechelt*. 1-604-885-9494



Judging from the recent bout of... sures, even summer was a slow... Almost overnight, **Cafe Vieux Montreal** on smoked meat sandwich, while **Verjus**, who dismal Oak Bay location followed suit.

Sanuk and brewpub **Hugo's** flanking the at the end of September, to partially make... Although, it's business as usual at **Paperella**. **Linda Szasz** put their popular restaurant on spend more time with family and concentrate Stage.

And winemaker and distiller **Ken Wind** increasingly popular **Victoria Gin**, is no less **Winchester Cellars** and **Victoria Gin** is now in partners **Bryan** and **Valerie Murray**. **Prize** **Winchester** is now the distiller. Plans for the whiskey have been put on hold, and as of yet to be announced.

While some fall by the wayside, others are made **Prima Strada**, a Napoli-style wood-fired pizza. Packed from the moment they opened their space in the **Cook Street Village** is the 15th around making pies, topping them with **Salt Farm** buffalo mozzarella, and locally made pizzas and four artisanal pizzas between 57 as wine list of Southern Italian wines, making 105-230 *Cook St.*, 250-586-8985. www.pizza

After a much-needed restaurant revamp, **Aura**. The glow is contemporary with floor skirts the park-like setting with harbor view the land and sea-based menu with Japanese-spiced beef salad. 680 *Montreal St.*, 250-388

Long time barista **Ken Gordon** has taken with him to his first coffee-haunted venture. St. 250-367-8027

Elizabeth Levinson and **Carlynn Wainwright** **Teaspoon** brought more vibrancy to the high tea bistros for **Howe Street** designers lucky counter workers. Both men were with training with **Justin** getting an oversized one heather, cedar, wood, iron and steel. **The** **For** those seeking more spiritual pursuits, **Sokolov's** on **Bennet Street** for serious tea cocktails, and a small pizza menu. 542 *Herr* www.sokolovs.com

Award-winning manager and **Victoria M Soule** has invented a new model. The **Wine** efficient - and food safe - with a two-inch w "can rip through any metal, copper, or 10 \$10. www.chefspatrevolution.com

Spinnakers Spirit Whistlers opened a 3 adjoining food and wine tasting bar called **250-596-3515**

Barf & Bunker is the latest from public interior of the 1896 heritage building from an accented with Victorian-era chandeliers and deposit themselves along the 16-meter-long snug rooms for a part from the 26 on top. 13 ex of **Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck**. What a stage at **Gordon Ramsay's Hospital Road** pub bar. **Bangers** and **mad** with **pantry** as made **naan** **kicks** **tachos** in the use. 1022 *Ge* www.bardandbunker.com