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MIND GAMES

Food for Thought

Had any “aha” moments lately? You know, those amazing flashes of genius that ripple through your head when it feels like you have managed to both over-think and under-think—at the same time.

When we published 23,000 Best Restaurant ballots last January in *Okanagan Life* and asked you to vote for your favourites, we didn't know that your mind was already made up. You probably didn't know it either—that your brain had already decided—it was just going to tell you later.

The eureka moment? I've been thinking a lot about that lately and have come to the conclusion that most of us think we are smarter than we are. I have also come to the conclusion that we are smarter than we think we are. Let me explain.

Through the wonder of neuroscience and brain scanning technology, we are able to see how the brain makes millions of decisions—with your best interests in mind—and it does so before you are aware of it. Simple decisions, like when to move a finger, are made about three-tenths of a second before the brain's master is aware of them. Our brains are solving problems, deciding which brand

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PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE

of cereal to buy and which restaurant will be taking our reservation many seconds before we become consciously aware of the decision.

Uh-oh, the left-brain rational minds have just checked out! How dare I suggest that they are not in complete control, every waking moment of every day of their lives? Well alpha-beta boys and girls, you are in for the shock of your lives. You see, science—oodles of it—is showing us that the rational mind of the neocortex will give us beautiful briefs and complex strategies to lead us to the illusion that our rational mind is in complete control. But it is the emotional part of our brains, sometimes referred to as the reptilian brain that rules the cranium.


This is a new paradigm. Scientific research is showing us that emotion governs all of our behaviours and drives our unconscious reactions. Positive inclinations and negative inclinations were present in the brains of voters as they “remembered” their last meal, glass of wine or some other connection they made with the restaurants they voted for. The emotional brain is about to be discovered and celebrated for its ability to bring the rational brain to its knees.

Does this mean that the results of the 16th Annual Best Restaurants reader survey are not as accurate, delicious and sexy as ever? No! It means that you now know that in life, the emotional brain is driving the bus. And with all our food gurus voting with a smile on their face and a sparkle in their eye, you can and will dine your way to happiness by trying all the great—no fantastic—restaurants of the Okanagan Valley.



Paul Byrne
Publisher

paul@okanaganlife.com
for comments,
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Kelowna: June 17-19, 2010

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MIKE ALLEN QUARTET

Vernon: June 5, 2010

Spare, elegant, melodic, soaring, fierce, Vancouver's Mike Allen is one of this country's top jazz saxophonists. He has studied Coltrane in depth and forged a style that is fresh and vital. Mike Allen Quartet featuring Miles Black (pianist) will be performing at the Vernon Jazz Club located at 3000-31st St., doors open around 7 p.m. Get your tickets in advance at the Bean to Cup Coffee House or Bean Scene Coffee House, in Vernon. For more info visit www.vernonjazzclub.ca.



PEACH CITY BEACH CRUISE

Penticton: June 25-27, 2010

Calling all vintage car owners, it's that time of year again, time to roll up your sleeves and start polishing the chrome on your antique ride for the annual cruise in Penticton. With over 800 of the finest antique vehicles on display it's a car buff's dream. The whole family will have fun, with live music, vendors, car auction starting around noon on Saturday and more. See you on Lakeshore Drive. The fun begins at 9 a.m. and goes until 11 p.m. For more info cruise by www.peachcitybeachcruise.com.

MORE CHOICE HAPPENINGS

IN SEARCH OF THE PICTURESQUE

Vernon Public Art Gallery: May 27 – July 29, 2010

Penticton-based artist Glenn Clark presents a selection of works from an ongoing investigation of the BC landscape that consists of his small-scale painting sketches produced at various locations. For more info on current and upcoming exhibitions visit www.vernonpublicartgallery.com. Opening reception May 27, 5-8 p.m.

HARPDOG BROWN & GRAHAM GUEST

Dream Cafe, Penticton: June 12, 2010

These guys perform with passion. Harpdog is a gifted singer and imaginative harmonica player who takes traditional blues into the 21st century. Graham has spent nearly all of his life playing music, starting on the keyboard as a toddler. It promises to be an evening of great blues: showtime 8 p.m. Call the Dream Cafe at 250.490.9012 to reserve seats. For more info visit www.thedreamcafe.ca.

NATIONAL HANG-GLIDING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Lumby: June 13-19, 2010

Hang-gliders and paragliders from around the globe compete in triangle, rectangle and open distance races. Lumby is known for its light winds and thermal lift pockets, perfect for triangle flights. Hosted by the Lumby Air Force Flying Club at Freedom Flight Park, 249 Mabel Lake Rd., one mile north of Lumby. For more info visit www.lumbyairforce.com.

CITY CHASE

Kelowna: June 26, 2010

Think reality TV is the only way to test your stamina and conquer your fears? Think again. City Chase is an urban adventure that requires two-person teams to make decisions on the fly as they search for ChasePoint locations, which test them with physical, intellectual, adventurous and humorous challenges. For more info and to register visit www.mitsubishicitychase.com.

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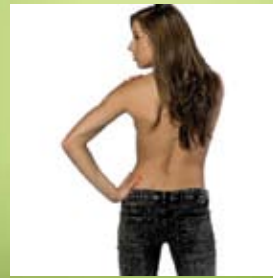
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SARAH CORNETT-CHING

Barely 19, Sarah Cornett-Ching is already in her sixth year of high speed left turns and bringing home the hardware. Her dad, Joe, who had been racing since Sarah was a baby, signed her on to his pit crew by the time she was eight. A couple of years later he got her a ride in a junior CASCAR. "I was hooked," she says.

After cleaning up with championships in the 2005 Hornet and 2007 Claimer series on Penticton's quarter-mile, Sarah moved up to the half-mile at Vernon's Motoplex (formerly SunValley Speedway). Last year she finished third in the NASCAR Whelen All-American series, and sixth in the West Coast Sportsman series, where she also took rookie of the year. Joe says she'd finish a 60-lap race in one car, get out, jump in the other car and go again—the only driver to compete in both classes for the full season.

Off track, Sarah's finishing a welding program ("super-helpful" for building the race cars) and looking for work to support her racing. This year she'll be running the full street stock series and selected sportsman races in Vernon and the Gordie Mannes August long weekend family event in Penticton. She's also supporting the BC Children's Hospital, contributing and accepting further donations at the track. —Dawn Renaud

PHOTO BY DAWN RENAUD



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FARMS OF THE FUTURE

Leasing is a win-win for established land owner and young farmers

Young farmers are becoming a rarity in the Okanagan. Agricultural land ranges from \$50,000 to \$150,000 per acre or more depending on the proximity to residential areas. Soaring land values, lack of collateral and student debts often make farming impossible for those just starting out. However, two graduates from the University of Guelph's Ontario Agricultural College are trying a different approach. Leasing has held surprises and rewards—for themselves and the property owner.

After Matt and Molly Thurston finished university and “Wwoofing” (worldwide opportunities on organic farms) in the United Kingdom, Matt began work for Farm Credit Canada and Molly coupled masters studies at UBC Okanagan with a job at the Tree Fruit Cooperative. In 2005, she met Bob McCoubrey

on the board of the Central Okanagan Community Gardens Society. It was serendipitous.

Two years later, Bob leased the couple one acre of his eight-acre organic farm in Lake Country. He provides use of the land, water, tractor and other equipment for 10 per cent of their gross sales. In 2009, this amounted to less than \$500 for the landlord but he's not worried.

“I see that they are learning every year and the potential is there,” says Bob. “Under ideal conditions, if they maximized the production on the land with their most lucrative crops possible, I might make \$1,200 but it's not about the money. As long as I can cover my land and water taxes and they are using a piece of land I wasn't using, it's a good thing. If this was a straight business deal, I'd sell the property for top dollar.”

When asked why he decided to lease, Bob laughs and says, “I'm getting old!” With succession on his mind and his children not interested in farming, leasing presented

PHOTO BY LISA HARRISON

compelling benefits. Agricultural land is taxed at a lower rate than residential land. If Bob and his wife Sharon decide to retire and stay in their farmhouse, leasing will provide income while qualifying them for the favourable farm tax rate. But for now, Bob's main motivation is to educate the next generation about organic farming.

"My wife and I spent 20 years taking the farm organic and keeping it that way is important to us. We got into leasing thinking that we were exploring ways to encourage young organic farmers."

Each year, the Thurstons farm half-an-acre, leaving the other acre fallow to replenish nitrogen and other nutrients. They visit the Lake Country farm a few times a week to plant, weed, water and harvest. Their experience and education is helpful but no guarantee of success. "We're learning at quite an expense sometimes," says Molly when she recounts one season's loss of carrot and beet crops. However, the leasing arrangement has been a relatively affordable training ground in terms of growing methods and selecting varieties that will sell well. They also enjoy an uncommon connection with their customers.

Monday evenings during the summer of 2009, they set up a produce table in the front yard of their Kelowna home. In late spring, five or six people stopped by each evening. By September, they were attracting about 40. "Most people are walking or biking, too, which is great because they are using sustainable transport to get here," says Molly.

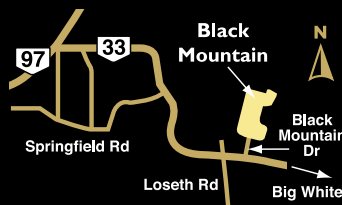
One afternoon they were pleasantly surprised to see a dozen neighbours buying, chatting, sampling and providing valuable feedback. "We're interested in building our community," says Matt. "It's part of what we've learned from Bob and Sharon." —*Lisa Harrison*



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OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMERS

GENE AND SHELLY COVERT



Visit Pancho's Country Market at Covert Farms nestled on the southern flank of McIntyre Bluff, and you are sure to find Shelly Covert extolling the use of purslane in salads. A tasty leaf vegetable, it grows wild and is considered a weed by some. Tasting an opportunity, the Coverts will be adding it to their line-up of over 60 organic crops. Named 2010 Outstanding Young Farmers (OYF) by BC's Agriculture Minister, Gene and Shelly have been recognized for "a focus on direct marketing of organic and conventional fruits, vegetables and wines produced on their 660-acre farm." When Gene's grandfather started the farm in 1959, he planted large acreages of tomatoes, onions, potatoes and grapes. But change has been dramatic. "Going biodynamic has meant lower scale farming and niche markets," Gene explains. Planting a 15-acre vineyard in 2005, they partnered with Kirby and Crystal Froese at Dunham & Froese Estate Winery. The Coverts hope their award inspires upcoming farmers. With three children aged three to nine years old, they admit to being taxed when school's out. In November they will be heading to Victoria as BC's representatives for the 2010 Canadian OYF finals. "When we meet other young farmers from all over the country, we don't feel so alone," says Gene. —Michael Botner

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BOTNER

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PULSE

BRAD VAILLANCOURT SAYS PRACTICING SPEED AND AGILITY AS WELL AS ACTIVITIES LIKE CLIMBING ROPES OR MONKEY BARS BUILD STRENGTH IN KIDS BY DEVELOPING NEUROLOGICAL PATHWAYS



DEVELOPING KID POWER

Strength coach touts benefits of weight training movements for kids

Parents of athletically driven children face unique challenges. Along with being forced to drag their kicking, screaming kid away from the field, pool, rink or diamond, they may have to resort to careful inspection to ensure that the youngster isn't hiding an injury. And they have to consider appropriate nutrition, equipment and training.

While most athletes want to improve, the challenge with children is determining which activities are truly beneficial. One common misconception is that weights and children don't mix, but current research shows neurological benefits for children who perform the movements of weight training.

Brad Vaillancourt, a professional strength coach and owner of Body by Brad in Kelowna, suggests that it is these movements, not resistance, that

develop the neurological pathways that increase strength.

"In-depth studies show that strength has very little to do with muscle size," he says. The muscle is there for structural support. Power comes from the central nervous system, so the better the pathway from the brain to the muscle, the stronger you are."

Like their brains, the physical abilities of elementary school-aged children develop at an accelerated pace. For instance, children learn basic, pure speed between the ages of eight and 10. "Practicing speed and agility, and learning to lift themselves by climbing ropes or monkey bars will net huge results by getting those neurological pathways developed," says Vaillancourt.

"Kids need multiple directional exercises that are fun," he says. "These exercises are fantastic, especially when they have to use their instincts and move before they can think about it. Tag, for instance, encourages you to anticipate what your oppo-



The chic children's store Modern Baby & Home has arrived at Mission Park Shopping Centre. Moving in from their former Pandosy location, Modern Baby & Home is welcoming customers to their fresh, new space. The new store-front will have a distinctly boutique feel with wonderful gifts for little ones and their parents to make life a little easier and beautiful.



Mission Park Shopping Centre
3155 Lakeshore Rd., Kelowna
250.868.1210

www.modernbabyandhome.com

ment is going to do, teaching you to read and react.” He adds that games like tag, dodge ball, floor hockey and any activity involving swift decisions with actions are a great way to teach youngsters to be quick and agile.

However, children also need challenges. The pathological motions required by sports are repetitive, becoming finer and finer until they are second nature. A child can practice throwing a ball until the velocity and accuracy can beat a batter. But if the pathways and muscles that work in an opposite motion aren’t developed, injury and fatigue can occur.

“... studies show that strength has very little to do with muscle size.”

Vaillancourt suggests that it is important for young athletes to try to throw, stop, catch and kick ambidextrously. Some youngsters will initially become frustrated while attempting to accomplish this, while others will embrace the challenge and run with it. A side benefit of the exercise is teaching children to face adversity and try their best.

“Team sports are also great for kids,” he says. “They teach children to rely on one another and have trust, and trust is one of the fundamental core values we have in life.” —Michael Freeman



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CHARITY OF CHOICE

RUN FOR WOMEN

Lace up your trainers and run for the kids

It's that time of year again, on June 13, 2010, women of all ages and fitness levels get together for a run (or walk) through the orchards of East Kelowna, this year to raise awareness and money for Okanagan Big Brothers Big Sisters.

For over 40 years Big Brothers Big Sisters have been mentoring young people in our Valley. The society matches youth with screened and trained volunteers. "Bigs" offer friendship, guidance and fun for youth. The children gain confidence, acquire new skills and competencies, and develop and enhance capacity to care for others. Last year the society provided critical community services to 193 children and their families.

As a non-profit charity, the society depends on donations to support programming like

in-school mentoring. Funding is used for recruiting, background checks, screening and maintaining ongoing professional support for the volunteers, youth and their families.

Get out and participate, no experience necessary. A portion of all entry fees goes to support Okanagan Big Brothers Big Sisters. Last year about 400 participants took part and raised \$8,000 for NOW Canada. Participants have the option of a five-kilometre walk or run, or for those athletic types a 10-kilometre run. Sign up with a girl friend(s) or take your daughter(s), it promises to be a fun morning. There are even awards for top finishers in each age category.

Register today and help make a difference in the life of a child. Drop by either Fresh Air Experience or Concept location in Kelowna for a registration form or get one online at www.freshair.ca. —Karen Slivar

Q&A



DESIREE NIELSEN

Author, *A Local Table*

WHAT'S THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THIS COOKBOOK? There is a lack of detailed and region-specific information to help consumers make better local choices. Because our book is locally produced, we can focus on where we live, who is producing our food, what is available each season and recipes that appeal to the unique needs of our communities. We hope the book will help to inspire people to learn more about who is growing their food and the importance of eating real foods, locally grown and getting back into the kitchen to have some fun with food.

WHY ARE THE RECIPES DIVIDED BY SEASON? As the cookbook follows a "local first" philosophy, it is divided into seasons based on availability of key ingredients.

While the 100 mile diet originated in BC, for most families a "local first" approach allows them to maximize their intake of locally produced foods while leaving room for favourites such as coffee, maple syrup and citrus.

WHAT FEATURES ARE GEARED TO OKANAGAN READERS? Our first-of-its-kind Okanagan seasonal availability chart was prepared by Farm Folk/City Folk. We also help residents get to know local producers like the Keim family at Sunny Slopes Farm in Naramata and the Harper family of Stinking Rows Garlic Farm in Salmon Arm as well as Farmcrest Foods Chicken and Happy Days Goat Dairy.

HOW WILL PEOPLE ON SPECIAL DIETS BENEFIT? Our recipes are approximately 90 per cent gluten free, 70 per cent vegetarian and we include information on special diets such as anti-inflammatory. Recipes have special colour coding for vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, nut free and detox friendly plans.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITES? For spring, the West Coast Potato Salad takes advantage of new potatoes; our Citrus and Wild Mushroom Fettuccine tastes fresh and our decadent Chocolate Fudge Cake highlights Celiac Awareness Month in May. —staff

Who knew?

LAVINGTON, east of Vernon, got its name from a local ranch bought around 1905 by Sir James Buchanan (1849-1935), a shareholder in the Coldstream Ranch. He named the property after his home in Lavington, Sussex, England. The son of Scottish immigrants, Buchanan was born in Brockville, Ont., but his family moved to Ireland soon after his birth. He eventually settled in London and became a business tycoon as owner of the Black & White scotch whisky distillery. —staff

SPIRIT OF PERSEVERANCE

Early Chinese immigrants faced widespread discrimination. But those who rose above it have made a lasting contribution and newcomers now feel welcome



OKANAGAN COLLEGE STUDENTS
CELEBRATE CHINESE NEW YEAR

FACING PAGE: KITCHEN STAFF ABOARD THE S.S. SICAMOUS; LUM LOC FAMILY — LOC OWNED A GENERAL STORE IN KELOWNA AND ARRANGED WORK CREWS FOR FARMS AND BUSINESSES; FARM WORKERS PLANTING TOBACCO BY MACHINE

It's hard to tell now, but the Okanagan once had several thriving Chinatowns established after migration to British Columbia began in the 1800s, mostly from the area around Guangzhou, or Canton, in southern China. Times were hard there, so the Barkerville gold rush and work building the Canadian Pacific Railway were powerful lures. In the Okanagan they worked collectively on Mission Creek gold diggings, invested in small holdings like the Armstrong celery beds, laboured on farms or opened restaurants, laundries and other businesses. Mostly single men, they typically lived simply in boarding houses, sometimes passing their leisure time gambling, drinking rice wine or smoking opium.

Kelowna's Chinatown, located near City Park, peaked at 500 people in the 1930s — about 10

per cent of the population. As the men aged, they often moved elsewhere although some are buried in the Asian section of Memorial Park Cemetery. By the 1960s, only about 60 people remained. When redevelopment came in the 1970s one of the last buildings, a small family-run general store, was dismantled and moved into the Okanagan Heritage Museum.

Similar-sized Chinese communities existed in Vernon and Armstrong, where Chinese men started working in market gardens around 1907. Penticton's Chinatown, known as Shanghai Alley, was smaller with a peak population of about 60. Osoyoos had no Chinese settlement because the community banded together to block hiring or leasing land to Chinese settlers for fear of competition.

Descendents of Chinese pioneers include former Kelowna city

councillor Ben Lee and Tun Wong, an accountant who worked for the city for three decades. Others of Chinese ancestry have arrived in recent years—often professionals or business people whose families have lived in Canada for several generations, says Ben. “Many of them that have come have scattered throughout the whole of Kelowna,” he says. “Some live on the Westside, some out in Rutland and so forth. So they're just mixed in with the diversity of this community.” The region also attracts students from China — some 250 are studying this year at Okanagan College and UBC Okanagan. The 2006 federal census identified about 1,800 people of Chinese heritage in Kelowna, Penticton and Vernon, making them the second-largest visible-minority after the Indo-Canadian community. **OL**

ON THE MENU

Many Okanaganites first encountered Asian culture at small family eateries. Most towns had at least one Chinese restaurant. Kelowna had several, including the City Park Café at the corner of Harvey and Abbott, which served perennial favourites like chow mein and sweet-and-sour chicken. One mainstay of Chinese meals — the fortune cookie — was actually invented by Chinese entrepreneurs in California. There are still many Chinese restaurants in the Okanagan, but corporate chains are replacing family operations, part of a wider national trend.



“It was a vibrant community. They looked after themselves and did not infringe on the public. If there were destitute people that didn't make enough money, they would be supported by their friends and families.”

—Ben Lee on Kelowna's former Chinatown



BEN LEE,
FORMER CITY COUNCILLOR

Ben Lee, pictured in the location of Kelowna's former Chinatown, is one of the best-known Chinese Canadians in the Valley. He is valued as a tireless community volunteer who may be best remembered for his 23 years of service on Kelowna city council.

Beyond the Okanagan, he is recognized as a pioneer in the province. Ben was the first man of Chinese heritage to teach school in British Columbia.

But his accomplishments did not come without struggle—including the ugly fact of discrimination. “It's been difficult at times,” Ben says. “I had to work harder at times.”

For instance, Ben was warned not to train as a teacher by those who felt he was unlikely to be hired. But he persevered and taught for 34 years in Rutland, retiring in 1985.

Ben was born in Armstrong, where for many years, his mother was the only Chinese woman. His father, a market gardener, was one of the few men able to scrape together the \$500 tax Canada charged each immigrant from China.

Ben was encouraged to be active in the community and to reach out to people from all walks of life. He followed that advice in Rutland, where he raised a family with his wife, Joyce, while volunteering for community organizations such as the parks board and the multicultural society. A Rutland park bears his name in recognition of his many contributions.

HATED HEAD TAX

For many years, Canada required Chinese migrants to pay an immigration fee known as the head tax before entering Canada. The fee, introduced in 1885, was designed to discourage Chinese immigration after completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Chinese were the only ethnic group to pay such a tax, which reached a maximum of \$500 per person. It was a large amount at the time and made it difficult to bring a wife to Canada. Many men lived as bachelors, often sending money home to support their families. The head tax was revoked in 1923, although other immigration restrictions continued until 1967. There are many examples of other discrimination. For instance, a 1902 federal commission concluded Asians were “unfit for full citizenship.” Closer to home, the BC Fruit Growers' Association lobbied against Chinese land ownership after the First World War. Chinese Canadians got the right to vote federally only in 1947 and provincially, in British Columbia, in 1949. In 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered the Canadian government's apology for the head tax, calling it a “grave injustice.” By then, only some 20 people who had paid the tax were still alive.

Culture

ROAR! THAT'S THE SOUND OF THE TIGER ON THIS YEAR'S CHINESE CALENDAR, WHICH BEGAN IN FEBRUARY WITH LOCAL FESTIVITIES THAT INCLUDED A DRAGON DANCE BY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT OKANAGAN COLLEGE. SOME SEE THE TIGER—ONE OF THE 12-YEAR CYCLE OF ANIMALS THAT FORM THE CHINESE ZODIAC—AS A HARBINGER OF TROUBLED TIMES. KEN LEUNG, A LOCAL FENG SHUI MASTER, PREDICTS THIS YEAR'S TIGER WILL BRING EVERYTHING FROM WAR AND NATURAL DISASTERS (NOT EXACTLY A SHOT-IN-THE-DARK PREDICTION) TO UNSTABLE RELATIONSHIPS. “IT'S A YEAR OF CONFLICT,” SAYS KEN, WHO HAS LIVED IN THE KELOWNA AREA FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS. CHINESE NEW YEAR, SOMETIMES CALLED THE SPRING FESTIVAL, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THE TRADITIONAL HOLIDAYS. TYPICALLY, PEOPLE EXCHANGE GIFTS, ENJOY FESTIVE MEALS AND DECORATE THEIR DOORS WITH RED PAPER SYMBOLS THAT EXPRESS HOPE FOR HAPPINESS, WEALTH AND LONG LIFE.



BEST RESTAURANT 2010



PHOTOS BY DANIEL HAYDUK, LYDIA ROSS AND CAREY TARR

Editors' Choice Awards next page

contributions by
Paul Byrne, Laurie Carter
and Karen Slivar

Readers' Choice Awards page 36

Results of *your* vote!



S





Best Place to Over Indulge

El Dorado Lakeside Restaurant
 500 Cook Rd., Kelowna
 250.763.7500

You really haven't had brunch until you try El Dorado's on Sundays. Your eyes will surely be larger than your stomach. Tip, if you see a dessert you must have, don't wait until you finish the main course(s) to grab one because it might not be there when you get back—although an equally seductive choice will be waiting for you. Brunch includes omelettes made to order, crab, smoked salmon, shrimp, fresh fruits, house made breads, bacon and sausage, fried potatoes and more. If you're the Jolly Green Giant you might be able to eat one of everything and still have room for dessert but we mere mortals have to choose between fresh croissants and Danish pastry. My money's on the croissants, and yes, I can eat two if I want too. If only they'd give you a doggy bag when you're seated. —Karen Slivar



EL DORADO PHOTOS BY LYDIA ROSS, HARVEST PHOTOS BY DANIEL HAYDUK

Best Place to Drive for Dinner

The Harvest Grille
 2725 KLO Rd., Kelowna
 250.862.3177

Driving to dine at the Harvest Grille is a treat in itself. Non-golfers will enjoy the deep green grass, orchards and apple trees, while golfers will reminisce about birdies and eagles. As stunning as the drive in is, the view actually improves after being seated. Ducks splash in the pond just outside the windows and the views of Okanagan Lake stretch out as far as Peachland. Vernon native, chef Heath Cates points out his garden positioned between the ninth and eighteenth greens where he coaxes the earth to provide most of the herbs for signature dishes like Orchard Apple Braised Lamb Shank, Tea Smoked West Coast Salmon and BBQ Pork Back Ribs. The salmon and ribs both surprised and delighted our palates. Heath marinates the fish in Earl Grey tea, smokes it and serves it with wasabi mashed potatoes, spring rolls and vegetables. —*Paul Byrne*



Best Pancake with Flavourful French Flair

A La Crêpe

Kelowna Farmers' and Crafters' Market
 (April to October, Wed. and Sat. mornings)
 250.469.1915

Silvia Thomas calls them her little delights — les p'tits bonheurs de Silvia — but there's nothing little about the delight I take in her fruit-icious crepes. If I know I'm going to the Kelowna market on Saturday, my mouth starts watering about Wednesday. On the big day, I join the inevitable line-up and watch the tag-team show as Silvia and her partner, Helene Guy, efficiently work their magic. Silvia, who hails from France's Loire Valley, cooks the crepes — ladling a dollop of batter onto her round cooking surface, then, at the moment of golden perfection, somehow managing to flip the platter sized wafer-thin pancakes with a wooden spatula. Off the grill to Helene's station for toppings and expert folding into an artful cone. Specials are listed on a sandwich board out front — the day's selection may include a berry coulis, apricot compote, apple and toasted almonds. When Helene says I can have it all — plus whipped cream... well. —*Laurie Carter*





Best Use of Local Ingredients

The Bike Shop Cafe

101-1357 Ellis St., Kelowna
250.861.6858

A favourite with the lunch crowd is transformed with white linens and candles into a casual dinner spot. Chef Giulio Piccioli uses local, farm fresh ingredients, in season, which your taste buds are going to enjoy. The menu changes weekly and offers a selection of vegetarian, chicken and fish entrees. When we visited in late summer it included falafel burgers and eggplant lasagna. We opted for the chef's selection—\$20 per person for a three-course meal. The food came to the table on serving platters that we dished out onto individual plates and started with homemade humus with focaccia and crisp green beans in balsamic, aioli vinaigrette. Delicious. The second course featured red and yellow tomatoes with bocconcini cheese sprinkled with balsamic vinaigrette. Wow, there is nothing better than farm fresh tomatoes in season—sweet, juicy, liquid sunshine. The main course presented us with slices of toasted bread layered with roasted eggplant topped with chunky tomato and pepper salsa, and goat cheese gnocchi. Another winner. We had room for dessert and shared the tiramisu. —*Karen Slivar*



PHOTOS BY DANIEL HAYDUK



Best Rediscovered Restaurant

Ricardo's Mediterranean Kitchen
415 Commonwealth Rd., North Kelowna
250.766.6810

I hadn't visited this place in ages and I don't know why. I took my chances one Thursday night and was lucky to get a seat at the bar, as it was live music night. Chef and owner Ricardo Scebba dishes up a selection of Mediterranean dishes. For dinner this evening I opted for the house special: crispy duck confit on a bed of spring greens with mustard vinaigrette, Anjou pear slices and blue cheese. As soon as my dinner arrived I dug in. The duck was tender, a bit salty and crisp. It was a cornucopia for the taste buds. With a basket of warm bread, it made for a nice light meal leaving room for dessert. To alleviate my anxiety over choosing just one, I indulged in the dessert trio: chocolate mouse, crème brûlée and gelato. I was in heaven from the very first bite. —*Karen Slivar*



Best Incentive to Get Up Early on a Saturday Morning

Okanagan Street Food
Kelowna Farmers' and Crafters' Market
(April to October, Wed. and Sat. mornings)
250.469.1915

One of my favourite things to do during the growing season is to visit the Kelowna Farmers' and Crafters' Market on a Saturday morning to buy locally grown produce. But before I hit the farmers' stands I make a beeline for the shiny white catering truck of Okanagan Street Food to stand in line with the rest of the Okanaganites who have discovered the ultimate breakfast wrap made with house cured bacon, fresh eggs, fried potatoes, aged cheddar and fresh salsa, enclosed in a soft tortilla and baked. While I patiently wait for my wrap to be assembled, I browse the homemade packaged foods on offer including soups, pastas and sauces. I can't resist the crackers (wheat, parmesan, rosemary and toasted fennel), which don't last a week in my household no matter how many packages I buy.—*Karen Slivar*

Best Use for Cabbage

Wasabi Izakaya Japanese Tapas
1623 Pandosy St., Kelowna
250.762.7788

Not just another Japanese restaurant. You won't find an extensive list of rolled sushi here. Instead, the menu tempts with new dishes like pan-fried cabbage pancake covered in a delicious sauce—I'd eat cabbage every day if it always tasted this good. If you like fish, try the black cod marinated with miso and grilled, it will melt in your mouth. Do take a look around at what other people are having, it all looks so intriguing you'll find yourself wanting to order more than you can eat. Definitely going to have to return to try more of chef Jyunya Nakamura's tapas-style dishes. —*Karen Slivar*





Best Bannock Period

Kekuli Cafe

505-3041 Louie Dr., West Kelowna
250.768.3555

As if the world didn't have enough temptations as it is, add bannock to the list, light and fluffy with a hint of sweetness, served warm. Heavenly. When I brought one home for hubby to taste and asked him what it reminded him of he said, "Croatian donuts like my aunt made for us," and that was the last time I've had one until now. Bannock is a simple bread that originates from Scotland. First Nations people made bannock with ingredients they had on hand and adopted it as their own. Here you'll find it made from flour, yeast, sugar and milk, fried to golden brown; served plain or dressed up with cinnamon sugar, maple walnut glaze or Saskatoon berry glaze to name a few. Kekuli's most popular flavours are plain and cinnamon sugar. For breakfast the cafe's menu includes options with a First Nation's twist like bannock 'n' egger and bannock benedict. Not breakfast time, don't despair, all sandwiches can be made on bannock.—*Karen Slivar*



Best Entertainment Value in a Menu

Brown Derby Café

3425 Pleasant Valley Rd., Armstrong
250.546.8221

Owners Carolyn and Neil Todd don't have to say a word, their characters are stamped all over the place. A card on my table is very specific. "Listen carefully while your voluptuous and perky server titillates your taste buds with today's tantalizing treats." So when my voluptuous and perky server rushes up and reels off: "Mango, carrot and walnut soup; avocado, cream cheese, tomato and lettuce wrap or Reuben..." then stands with pencil poised over notepad, I'm all ears, but a little shaken. (Guessing the Brown Derby's mostly local trade already knows the regular line-up.) Apparently it dawns on Carolyn that she doesn't recognize my face, because she suddenly adds, "... or a menu..."—casts about and grabs one from an empty table. I

KEKULI PHOTOS BY LYDIA ROSS, BROWN DERBY PHOTOS BY KYLE PERISON



go with the soup special (bright orange, sweet and yum!) and on the eavesdropped advice of a lady at the next table, a wedge of the pie for which “Carolyn wins ribbons at the fair.” For interest I check out the chatty breakfast menu. It warns: “Do not ask your server for basted or poached eggs — it won’t happen.” When I see items like the World Famous Egg Thing for \$1.99 and the Not Quite so Famous Sausage Thing (but getting there!) for \$2.50, I’m betting you have to share a table in the little dining room most mornings. The menu ends with an appeal: “Be nice to us — we are not morning people!” and I hear Neil singing along to the Beach Boys from the kitchen. What did I say about character? —*Laurie Carter*



Best Treat Before a Show

Eclectic Med Restaurant

2915-30th Ave., Vernon
250.558.4646

For a special evening out before the theatre Eclectic Med is the ticket. The interior decor is warm and inviting. We like to take our time and read through the menu, which offers up many dishes that I don’t cook at home. This night the coffee rubbed breast of duck caught my attention: slow roasted, sliced medium rare with goat cheese or mushroom risotto, seasonal vegetables and a red wine and orange mocha reduction sauce. My mouth waters from the memory. A feast for the eyes, all meals arrive artfully arranged. Portion sizes aren’t too big so you can indulge in dessert with little guilt. The crème caramel had my name on it and was the perfect ending to a delicious meal. —*Karen Slivar*



Best Variation on a Standard Theme

The Phoenix & Lounge

3117-30th Ave., Vernon
250.260.1189

The masculine decor of the Phoenix — chocolate brown walls, dark woods, leather seating and autumn-toned artwork — feels right for a steakhouse. Even the heritage building that houses this downtown Vernon institution lends an air of solid respectability. But don’t be fooled by appearances into expecting a staid and predictable menu. Start with the appie list and I wager you’ll be surprised at the chef’s unique take on a very traditional dish. This is absolutely the first time I’ve seen Yorkshire pudding, that bastion of traditional roast beef dining, turned out with such innovation. Consider the Prime Shires — a Yorkshire pud stuffed with steak and aioli or the tuna version with wasabi aioli. And for a steakhouse, there’s sure a lot of fusion going on — coconut shrimp, Thai salmon, lemon pepper chicken and bison meatball linguini — but fear not, carnivores, this kitchen also rustles up seven different cuts of iron-rich, flavour-packed steak. (Be still my beating heart.) Martini Thursdays if you need another reason to check it out. —*Laurie Carter*





Best Bet for Schnitzel in a Garden

Hubert's
1823 Vernon St., Lumby
250.547.8808

I discovered Hubert's by accident. I was in Lumby doing a photo shoot on paragliding and finished up around lunchtime. Terror (or was that exhilaration) builds a ferocious appetite—so the sight of a flower-decked patio in front of a homey restaurant was life saving. My next discovery, that the house specialty was schnitzel, sent me over the moon. Hubert had found the way to my heart. Last year the little eatery with the loyal following from all over the Valley and beyond, passed to new ownership, chef Alex Pinnsonault, but (and here I'm expecting a collective sigh of relief) schnitzel is still on the menu. The old favourite is now joined by seafood platters, ribs, steaks and homemade chicken Cordon Bleu. Vegetarians can find sustenance in the salad section and I defy anybody to resist a bag of the oat-meal chocolate chip cookies placed alluringly by the cash register to entice you into a just few more calories for the road. —Laurie Carter

Best Meal in Historic Digs

Zias Stonehouse Restaurant
14015 Rosedale Ave., Summerland
250.494.1105

A popular dining spot with both locals and visitors to the Valley, Zias is located in an old stone house originally built in 1916. Inside the decor shouts old world charm with stucco walls, terracotta tiles, fireplace, colourful table linens, large potted houseplants and family portraits. Open for lunch and dinner, I decided to drop in for lunch. The first thing I spotted on the menu was the baked French



onion soup—a favourite of mine. It was worth the 15-minute bake time. It came to the table piping hot with ooey-gooey melted mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. A meal in itself, I browsed the menu for lunch. Today's special caught my attention: butter chicken. I love Indian food and I was not disappointed although I could have wished for basmati rice and done without the veg. Wanting to test the waters but not having much spare space in the tummy after all that food, I only had room for a scoop of homemade lemon sorbet, a knockout.—Karen Slivar



HUBERT'S PHOTO CONTRIBUTED, ZIAS PHOTOS BY CAREY TARR



Best Find for Fresh Local Food Fanatics

Victoria Rd Deli and Bistro
108-13615 Victoria Rd. N., Summerland
250.583.9343

While chefs all over the Okanagan talk about fresh local ingredients, Roger Gillespie really walks the walk. Like many good eateries, Victoria Rd's menu changes often, though you can always count on specialties like hand-made smoked duck ham and fresh corned beef. Being a fry fan, I was knocked out by Roger's signature mixed frites — yams, potatoes and parsnips — and then I discovered I was dipping these little tasties into his own smoked tomato and cherry ketchup made with heirloom tomatoes grown on his own property. Sensational. The smart 20-seat dining space incorporates a trendy concrete bar where you can sit and watch the action in the open kitchen. Stop by the bistro's alter-ego where the deli selection covers all the essentials for a wine country al fresco lunch or take home dinner. Features include Okanagan Street Food pasta and sauces, Vij's Indian cuisine, Poplar Grove and Gort's Gouda cheeses, deli meats and bottled condiments from lots of Okanagan producers. —*Laurie Carter*



VICTORIA RD DELI PHOTOS BY CAREY TARR



Best Accidental Find

Villa Rosa Ristorante
765 Westminster Ave., Penticton
250.490.9595

One evening I found myself in Penticton looking for a place to eat. Villa Rosa caught my eye, neat as a pin with cars in the parking lot. The inside was as inviting as the exterior with light coloured walls, dark wood accents and white linen decked tables. I wasn't that hungry but the spinach salad caught my eye, drizzled with raspberry vinaigrette and topped with blue cheese, mushrooms, almonds and mandarin oranges. My server assured me the starter size was perfect before a meal and she was right. The vinaigrette was thick and tasty, the blue cheese added punch and the mandarins sweetness. Delicious. For dinner the cannelloni cried out to me: fresh pasta crepe stuffed with ricotta cheese and baked in a rosé sauce. The crepe was a delicate change from traditional pasta and oh so good. The sauce was so scrumptious I sopped up every last bit with my bread. Now I was on a roll and decided to over indulge with the crème brûlée: flavoured with vanilla and a hint of Grand Marnier. Brilliant. Next time I'm in town I'll drop by again. —*Karen Slivar*





Best Dining in a Converted Cannery

Valentine's Café and The Can Coffee Company

1475 Fairview Rd., Penticton

Penticton's converted Cannery Trade Centre serves up double-barrelled dining. For a serious cup of Joe with a side of art, The Can Coffee Company is casual and hip. I like to sink into one of the big comfy sofas or deep easy chairs and look over works by students of the Okanagan School of the Arts that line the walls or take in a production by the Many Hats Theatre Company on the Cannery stage. When I'm hungry, I head straight for Valentine's Café. Again, local art for sale makes for a tasty gallery, but here the menu favours home cooking like thick and spicy tomato/veg puree soup with a veggie sandwich on fresh bread featuring avocado and asparagus. Makes me very happy. There's a daily special along with wraps and sandwiches on chiabata. Locals swear by the breakfast wraps, omelettes and Bennie's. —Laurie Carter



Best Kid-Friendly Place for Steak

Black Iron Grill & Steakhouse

152 Riverside Dr., Penticton
250.493.2711

When you're struck with that primal urge for a slab of good red meat (vegetarians, close your eyes), heading for a Days Inn likely isn't your first thought. But if you're in Penticton when the pangs hit, this is the place that locals recommend. Get past the roadhouse exterior and parking lot view from the patio and you're in for some serious carnivorous

delights — three popular steak cuts and prime rib of AAA Reserve Alberta beef. The menu also includes alternatives like salmon, chicken, ribs and lamb. One of the big pluses for the Black Iron is that you can take the kids along and still have some hope of enjoying your own meal. Staff will set them up with a mini DVD player and selections from the kids' menu, everybody's happy. Solo diners feel comfy at the sit-up bar with full food service while patio seating provides the comfort of heaters and lap rugs for chilly desert nights. —Laurie Carter



TOP LEFT PHOTO BY LAURIE CARTER, OTHER PHOTOS BY CAREY TARR

Best Do-it-Yourself Dining Emporium

The Bench Market

368 Vancouver Ave., Penticton
250.492.2222

When I'm heading home from a day of concentrated Naramata Bench wine tasting and don't know what to do for dinner — The Bench Market has my back. This artisan food market stocks terrific take-home menu boosters like English chicken pie, Vij's Indian dishes, and gourmet soups and pizzas. I can add salads and pickles from the deli along with spices, condiments like Okanagan Wineland Dressings and cherry and peach chutney. If the day's itinerary didn't include a stop at Poplar Grove, I can still get a couple of rounds of cheese to take home. Sometimes I reverse my day and drop in for a breakfast wrap or a scone and coffee on the way to Naramata. At noon, a panini or something decadent from the gelato bar tastes good on the patio. —*Laurie Carter*



Best Chic Bistro in a Vineyard

Passa Tempo

1200 Rancher Creek Rd., Osoyoos
250.495.8007

My first experience of Passa Tempo, the chic bistro at Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa, was a dinner I won't forget. It was my amazing good fortune to be seated at the restaurant's 20-person alder wood table next to wine guru John Schreiner. He patiently talked me through a succession of wonderful Okanagan vintages (representing a good number of the more than 140 labels on the wine list from the Valley and beyond) that were paired with a succession of equally wonderful dishes (and did it without making me feel like a complete wine dolt). With the food I was on much more solid ground. I suffer no inferiority complex when it comes to appreciating the finer points of west coast mussels and daily terrines, pan seared Queen Charlotte halibut or grilled bison ribeye. Jeremy Luypen, a former basketball jock who found joy in the kitchen and took his initial training at Okanagan College, has donned the tall hat as executive chef and promises a locally inspired menu that will feature a daily rolling seven-course Chef's Table tasting menu paired with wine. —*Laurie Carter*



Best Place to Find Your Lunch

Pacific Brimm Coffee & Tea Co.

103-399 Main St., Penticton
250.490.8725

Forgot your lunch, need a sweet break, Pacific Brimm has what you are looking for. The menu includes deli sandwiches made to order, wraps, fresh salads and wholesome soups. The place even roasts its own turkey. Try the homemade cookies, muffins, cakes, brownies and squares. Recharge yourself with a specialty coffee, a selection of tea or a refreshing smoothie. I recommend the London Fog latte made from loose-leaf Earl Grey tea and a shot of vanilla syrup. Don't forget to get a cookie with it. —*Karen Slivar*



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16TH ANNUAL BEST RESTAURANTS READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

NOTE: These results were tabulated from official ballots that were at least 50 per cent completed. There is neither editorial nor advertising influence on these results. *Compiled by Chelsi Middleton*

UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED:

Central = Kelowna; North = Vernon; South = Penticton

BEST OF THE BEST

CENTRAL

- 1 Bouchon's Bistro
- 1 RauDZ Regional Table
- 2 Old Vine's Restaurant
- 2 Ricardo's Mediterranean Kitchen
- 3 Gasthaus on the Lake (Peachland)

NORTH

- 1 Intermezzo Restaurant
- 2 The Eclectic Med Restaurant
- 3 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 3 The Italian Kitchen Company

SOUTH

- 1 Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro (Summerland)
- 2 Amante Bistro
- 2 Zias Stonehouse Restaurant (Summerland)

- 3 Bogner's of Penticton
- 3 Local Lounge • Grille (Summerland)

BEST ROMANTIC DINING

CENTRAL

- 1 Eldorado Dining Room
- 2 Old Vine's Restaurant
- 2 Ricardo's Mediterranean Kitchen
- 3 The Vintage Dining Room
- 3 The Yellow House Restaurant

NORTH

- 1 ORA Restaurant Lounge
- 2 The Italian Kitchen Company
- 3 Intermezzo Restaurant

SOUTH

- 1 Theo's Restaurant Ltd.
- 2 Bogner's of Penticton

- 3 The Hooded Merganser

BEST CHEF

CENTRAL

- 1 Ricardo Scebba (Ricardo's Mediterranean Kitchen)
- 2 Rod Butters (RauDZ Regional Table)
- 3 Dominique Couton (Bouchon's Bistro)

NORTH

- 1 Neil Todd (The Brown Derby Café)
- 2 Christopher Davy (Intermezzo Restaurant)
- 3 Craig Bell (Hungry Jacks)

SOUTH

- 1 Darin Paterson (Bogner's of Penticton)
- 2 Aaron Flynn (Sage & Vines Bistro)
- 3 Roger Gillespie (Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro)

BEST CATERER

CENTRAL

- 1 Deli City Café & Catering/ Bunches Bistro
- 2 The Bohemian Café & Catering Co.
- 2 The Ridge Restaurant (managed by Okanagans Finest Foods)
- 3 Details Catering

NORTH

- 1 Gumtree Catering
- 2 The Other Company Catering (Armstrong)
- 3 Gourmet to Go

SOUTH

- 1 Joy Road Catering
- 2 Black Iron Grill & Steakhouse

BEST PLACE FOR A DINNER DATE

CENTRAL

- 1 Ricardo's Mediterranean Kitchen
- 2 Bouchon's Bistro
- 3 Cabana Bar & Grille

NORTH

- 1 Intermezzo Restaurant
- 2 Bamboo Beach Fusion Grille
- 3 The Phoenix & Lounge

SOUTH

- 1 The Hooded Merganser
- 2 Amante Bistro
- 2 Theo's Restaurant Ltd.
- 3 Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro (Summerland)

BEST VIEW

CENTRAL

- 1 Grapevine Restaurant
- 2 Summerhill Sunset Bistro
- 3 Earl's On Top

NORTH

- 1 Blue Heron Waterfront Pub & Restaurant
- 2 Alexander's Beach Pub
- 3 Range at Predator Ridge

SOUTH

- 1 The Hooded Merganser
- 2 Lost Moose Lodge & BBQ Dinner House
- 3 Local Lounge • Grille (Summerland)

BEST PATIO

CENTRAL

- 1 Eldorado Dining Room
- 2 Summerhill Sunset Bistro
- 3 Grapevine Restaurant

NORTH

- 1 Blue Heron Waterfront Pub & Restaurant
- 2 The Phoenix & Lounge
- 3 Alexander's Beach Pub

SOUTH

- 1 Good Omens (Summerland)
- 2 The Hooded Merganser
- 3 The Patio at Lake Breeze (Lake Breeze Estate Winery)

**BEST DÉCOR/
AMBIANCE/ATMOSPHERE**

CENTRAL

- 1 Ricardo's Mediterranean Kitchen
- 2 The Rotten Grape Wine & Tapas Bar
- 3 Cactus Club Café

NORTH

- 1 Intermezzo Restaurant
- 2 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 3 Bamboo Beach Fusion Grille

SOUTH

- 1 The Hooded Merganser
- 1 Zias Stonehouse Restaurant (Summerland)
- 2 Amante Bistro
- 3 Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro (Summerland)

BEST FAMILY RESTAURANT

CENTRAL

- 1 White Spot Restaurant
- 2 Boston Pizza
- 3 Red Robin

NORTH

- 1 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge
- 2 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 2 The Pantry Restaurant
- 3 White Spot Restaurant

SOUTH

- 1 Boston Pizza
- 1 Mykonos Pizza & Spaghetti House
- 2 Shades on Main Family Restaurant

BEST BREAKFAST

CENTRAL

- 1 The Jammery
- 2 The Bohemian Café & Catering Co.
- 3 De Dutch Pannekoek House
- 3 Pepperpot Grill

NORTH

- 1 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 2 Denny's Restaurant
- 3 Hungry Jacks (Enderby)

SOUTH

- 1 Good Omens (Summerland)
- 2 The Hooded Merganser
- 3 Shades on Main Family Restaurant

BEST SUNDAY BRUNCH

CENTRAL

- 1 Eldorado Dining Room
- 2 The Vintage Dining Room
- 3 The Grand Bay Café
- 3 The Jammery

NORTH

- 1 Range at Predator Ridge
- 2 The Pantry Restaurant
- 3 Friesen's Country Tyme Gardens

BEST BUFFET

CENTRAL

- 1 Eldorado Dining Room
- 2 Mama Panda Buffet
- 3 Yamas Taverna

NORTH

- 1 Range at Predator Ridge
- 2 Kiki Gardens Restaurant
- 3 Branches Café

SOUTH

- 1 China Palace
- 2 Beijing Restaurant

BEST LUNCH SPOT

CENTRAL

- 1 The Fixx Café
- 1 Wood Fire Bakery
- 2 The Greenroom
- 3 Ric's Grill

NORTH

- 1 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 2 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge
- 3 Little Tex Restaurants

SOUTH

- 1 Good Omens (Summerland)
- 2 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge
- 3 Burger 55

BEST COFFEE HOUSE

CENTRAL

- 1 Bean Scene Coffee House
- 2 Starbucks Coffee Co.
- 3 Blenz

NORTH

- 1 Bean Scene Coffee House
- 2 Talkin' Donkey
- 3 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)

SOUTH

- 1 Good Omens (Summerland)
- 2 Fibonacci Roastery & Café

**BEST PLACE
FOR A CUP OF TEA**

CENTRAL

- 1 Chai Baba Tea House
- 2 Dragons Lair Specialty Teas (West Kelowna)
- 3 Bean Scene Coffee House

NORTH

- 1 Bean to Cup Coffee House & Roasters
- 2 Bean Scene Coffee House
- 3 Mimi's Tea Room & Café (Enderby)
- 3 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)

SOUTH

- 1 Time For Tea
- 2 Fibonacci Roastery & Café
- 3 Good Omens (Summerland)

**BEST CASUAL
RESTAURANT/BISTRO**

CENTRAL

- 1 Cactus Club Café
- 2 Joey Kelowna
- 3 Moxie's Classic Grill
- 3 The Fixx Café

NORTH

- 1 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge
- 2 Hungry Jacks (Enderby)
- 3 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)

SOUTH

- 1 Good Omens (Summerland)
- 2 White Spot Restaurant
- 3 Dream Café
- 3 Sage & Vines Bistro



BEST SERVICE

CENTRAL

- 1 Bouchon's Bistro
- 1 RauDZ Regional Table
- 2 Earl's On Top
- 2 The Vintage Dining Room
- 3 Joey Kelowna

NORTH

- 1 Intermezzo Restaurant
- 2 Bamboo Beach Fusion Grille
- 3 The Italian Kitchen Company

SOUTH

- 1 Good Omens (Summerland)
- 2 Theo's Restaurant Ltd.
- 3 Bogner's of Penticton

BEST TAKEOUT

CENTRAL

- 1 Boston Pizza
- 2 Jimmy Ho's Takeout Express
- 2 Wok Inn Restaurant
- 3 Mad Mango Café

NORTH

- 1 Wok Box
- 2 Apple Lane
- 2 The Great Wall Restaurant

SOUTH

- 1 Burger 55
- 2 Lee's Overseas Delights
- 3 Murray's Pizza & Pasta (Summerland)

BEST PUB

CENTRAL

- 1 Tonics Pub
- 2 Sturgeon Hall Restaurant
- 3 Brandts Creek Neighbourhood Pub
- 3 Doc Willoughby's Downtown Pub
- 3 Gasthaus on the Lake (Peachland)

NORTH

- 1 Sir Winstons Neighbourhood Pub
- 2 Blue Heron Waterfront Pub & Restaurant
- 3 Squires Four Public House

SOUTH

- 1 Kettle Valley Station Pub
- 2 The Barley Mill Brew Pub & Bistro
- 3 Peacock's Perch Neighbourhood Pub (Summerland)

BEST SPORTS BAR

CENTRAL

- 1 Boomers Sports Bar & Grill
- 1 Sturgeon Hall Restaurant
- 2 Dakotas Sports Bar & Grill
- 2 Tonics Pub

- 3 Rusty's Steakhouse & Sports Lounge

NORTH

- 1 The Roster Sports Club Bar & Grill
- 2 Kal Sports Bar
- 3 Monashee's Bar & Grill

SOUTH

- 1 The Barley Mill Brew Pub & Bistro
- 2 Barking Parrot

BEST LATE NIGHT BITE AFTER 10PM

CENTRAL

- 1 Boston Pizza
- 2 Cactus Club Café
- 3 Denny's Restaurant
- 3 Kelly O'Bryan's Neighbourhood Restaurant

NORTH

- 1 Boston Pizza
- 2 Checkers Bar & Grill
- 3 Denny's Restaurant
- 3 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge

SOUTH

- 1 Denny's Restaurant
- 2 Boston Pizza
- 3 Kettle Valley Station Pub

BEST JAPANESE

CENTRAL

- 1 O-Zeki Japanese Restaurant
- 2 Momo Sushi
- 3 Yamato Japanese Cuisine

NORTH

- 1 Mahoroba Japanese Restaurant
- 2 Bento & Sushi
- 3 Edo Japan

SOUTH

- 1 Isshin Japanese Deli
- 2 Lee's Overseas Delights
- 3 Ginza Japanese Restaurant
- 3 Tokyo Japanese Restaurant

BEST ASIAN FUSION

CENTRAL

- 1 Mekong Restaurant
- 2 Mon Thong Thai Restaurant
- 2 Sai Gon Restaurant
- 3 Bai Thong Thai Food Restaurant

NORTH

- 1 Temptasian Restaurant & Bar
- 2 Bamboo Beach Fusion Grille
- 3 Boa-Thong Thai Restaurant
- 3 Golden Crown Restaurant

SOUTH

- 1 Lee's Overseas Delights
- 2 Saigon on Main Restaurant

BEST INDIAN

CENTRAL

- 1 Dawett Fine Indian Cuisine
- 2 Chutney Cuisine of India
- 3 Poppadoms

NORTH

- 1 New Delhi Indian Restaurant
- 2 The Curry Pot Indian & Nepalese Cuisine Ltd.
- 3 The Palace

SOUTH

- 1 Best of India Restaurant (Oliver)
- 2 Haveli Fine Indian Cuisine

BEST ITALIAN

CENTRAL

- 1 Mamma Rosa Authentic Italian Restaurant
- 2 La Bussola
- 3 Ricardo's Mediterranean Kitchen

NORTH

- 1 The Italian Kitchen Company
- 2 Tita's Italian Bistro
- 3 Intermezzo Restaurant

SOUTH

- 1 Villa Rosa Ristorante Italiano
- 2 La Casa Ouzeria Restaurant
- 3 Pasta Factory

BEST GREEK

CENTRAL

- 1 Yamas Taverna
- 2 The Greek House Restaurant (Lake Country)
- 3 Olympia Pizza & Greek Taverna

NORTH

- 1 Papa's Greek Taverna (Armstrong)
- 2 Minos Greek House (Salmon Arm)

SOUTH

- 1 Theo's Restaurant Ltd.
- 2 La Casa Ouzeria Restaurant

BEST EUROPEAN (FRENCH, GERMAN, ETC.)

CENTRAL

- 1 Bouchon's Bistro
- 2 Gasthaus on the Lake (Peachland)
- 3 Wood Fire Bakery

NORTH

- 1 The Eclectic Med Restaurant
- 3 Café Continental

SOUTH

- 1 Bogner's of Penticton
- 2 Il Vecchio Delicatessen

**BEST MEXICAN/
SOUTHWEST CUISINE**

CENTRAL

- 1 Hector's Casa
- 2 DJ's Restaurant
- 3 Memphis Blues BBQ House
- 3 Taco Del Mar

NORTH

- 1 Little Tex Restaurants
- 2 Los Huesos
- 3 Taco Del Mar

SOUTH

- 1 The Vallarta Grill

BEST SHUSWAP EATERY

- 1 Billabong Pub (Sorrento)
- 2 Moose Mulligans Marine Pub (Sicamous)
- 2 Table 24 Restaurant Ltd. (Salmon Arm)

BEST TAPAS/APPIES

CENTRAL

- 1 The Rotten Grape Wine & Tapas Bar
- 2 Waterfront Restaurant & Wine Bar
- 3 Joey Kelowna
- 3 Kelly O'Bryan's Neighbourhood Restaurant

NORTH

- 1 Intermezzo Restaurant
- 2 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge
- 3 Squires Four Public House

SOUTH

- 1 The Vanilla Pod Restaurant (Summerland)
- 2 Local Lounge · Grille (Summerland)
- 3 Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro (Summerland)
- 3 VooDoo's

BEST SOUP

CENTRAL

- 1 The Greenroom
- 2 The Old Bike Shop Café
- 3 The Bread Company

NORTH

- 1 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 2 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge
- 3 Little Tex Restaurants
- 3 The Sprouted Fig

SOUTH

- 1 Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro (Summerland)
- 2 The Bench Market
- 2 Wheat Grass Café




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BEST SALAD

CENTRAL

- 1 Joey Kelowna
- 2 The Chopped Leaf
- 3 The Greenroom

NORTH

- 1 Little Tex Restaurants
- 2 Hungry Jacks (Enderby)
- 2 Intermezzo Restaurant
- 3 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)

SOUTH

- 1 Dream Café
- 2 Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro (Summerland)
- 3 The Sweet Tooth (Summerland)

BEST VEGETARIAN

CENTRAL

- 1 Dawett Fine Indian Cuisine
- 2 Lake Tai Restaurant
- 3 The Bohemian Café & Catering Co.
- 3 The Fixx Café

NORTH

- 1 2P's Health Kitchen Restaurant
- 2 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)

SOUTH

- 1 Dream Café
- 2 Wheat Grass Café

BEST PLACE TO BUY FRUITS/VEGETABLES

CENTRAL

- 1 Quality Greens Farm Market
- 2 Kelowna Farmers' and Crafters' Market
- 3 Choices Markets
- 3 Farmer's Fruit & Produce (Winfield)

NORTH

- 1 Quality Greens Farm Market
- 2 Swan Lake Nurseryland Fruit Market & Garden Centre
- 3 Askew's Foods

SOUTH

- 1 Quality Greens Farm Market
- 2 Penticton Farmers' Market

BEST NATURAL FOOD STORE

CENTRAL

- 1 Nature's Fare Natural Foods
- 2 Choices Markets
- 3 Abaco Health
- 3 Quality Greens Farm Market

NORTH

- 1 Nature's Fare Natural Foods
- 2 Simply Delicious
- 3 Anna's Vitamins Plus
- 3 Lifestyle Natural Foods

SOUTH

- 1 Whole Foods Market
- 2 Nature's Fare Natural Foods
- 2 Summerland Food Emporium

BEST SPECIALTY MEAT SHOP

CENTRAL

- 1 T-Bones Fresh Meal Market
- 2 Illichmann's Gourmet Foods
- 3 L&D Meats & Deli

NORTH

- 1 Vernon Butcher Shop & Catering Services
- 2 Helmut's Sausage Kitchen
- 3 Grillers Meats & Eats

SOUTH

- 1 Tony's Meats & Deli Ltd.
- 2 A & K Grimm Sausage Ltd.
- 3 T-Bones Fresh Meal Market

BEST STEAK

CENTRAL

- 1 The Keg Steakhouse & Bar
- 2 Ric's Grill
- 3 19 Okanagan Grill + Bar
- 3 Sal's Prime Steakhouse

NORTH

- 1 The Phoenix & Lounge
- 2 The Eclectic Med Restaurant
- 3 The Cattlemen's Club Restaurant

SOUTH

- 1 Black Iron Grill & Steakhouse
- 2 Bogner's of Penticton
- 2 Sage & Vines Bistro

BEST SEAFOOD

CENTRAL

- 1 Christophers Steak & Seafood Restaurant
- 1 Codfathers
- 2 Joey's Only Seafood Restaurant
- 3 RauDZ Regional Table

NORTH

- 1 Anchor Inn Neighbourhood Pub (Armstrong)
- 2 C-Lovers Fish & Chips
- 3 Fisherman Direct Seafoods (Enderby)

SOUTH

- 1 Buy The Sea Seafood Market
- 2 Cozy Bay Seafood Café (Summerland)
- 2 Salty's Beach House

BEST BURGER

CENTRAL

- 1 White Spot Restaurant
- 2 Fatbuger
- 3 Gorgeous Georges Gourmet Burgers
- 3 Red Robin
- 3 Sturgeon Hall Restaurant

NORTH

- 1 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge
- 1 Long John's Pub (Silver Star — seasonal)
- 2 Hungry Jack's (Enderby)
- 3 The Roster Sports Club Bar & Grill

SOUTH

- 1 Burger 55
- 2 White Spot Restaurant
- 3 VooDoo's

BEST VEGGIE BURGER

CENTRAL

- 1 The Fixx Café
- 2 Milestones Grill & Bar
- 3 Sturgeon Hall Restaurant
- 3 White Spot Restaurant

NORTH

- 1 Hungry Jacks (Enderby)
- 2 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 3 White Spot Restaurant

SOUTH

- 1 Burger 55
- 2 Dream Café

BEST SANDWICH/WRAP/PANINI

CENTRAL

- 1 The Pita Pit
- 2 The Greenroom
- 3 Wrap Zone

NORTH

- 1 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 2 Bean to Cup Coffee House & Roasters
- 3 Café Continental

SOUTH

- 1 Good Omens (Summerland)
- 2 Il Vecchio Delicatessen
- 3 The Bench Market
- 3 Wheat Grass Café





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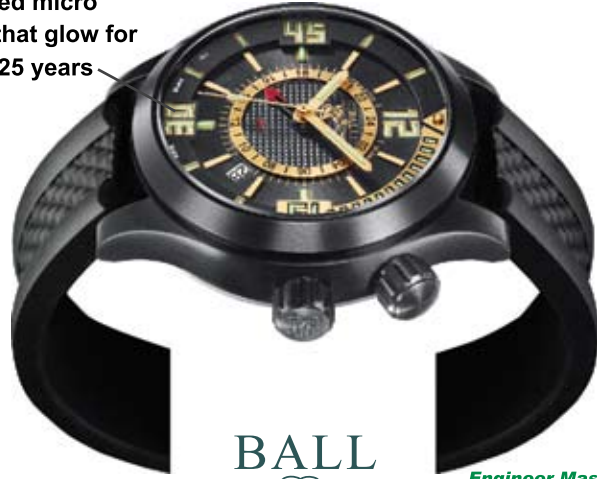
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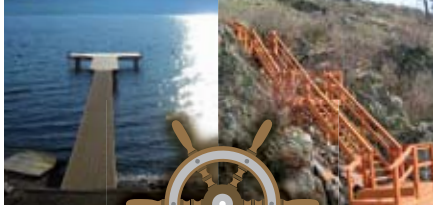
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BEST PIZZA

CENTRAL

- 1 Bordello's Italian Pizzeria
- 2 Boston Pizza
- 3 Murray's Pizza & Pasta (West Kelowna)
- 3 Papito's Pizza

NORTH

- 1 J J's Pizza Plus (Armstrong)
- 1 Jim's Place
- 2 Panago Pizza
- 3 Uncle Dave's Pizzeria
- 3 Vern's Pizza

SOUTH

- 1 Mykonos Pizza & Spaghetti House
- 2 Kettle Valley Station Pub
- 3 Prima Pizza (Summerland)

BEST FRENCH FRIES

CENTRAL

- 1 Bouchon's Bistro
- 2 New York Fries
- 3 Shady Rest British Fish & Chips

NORTH

- 1 C—Lovers Fish & Chips
- 2 Fisherman Direct Seafoods (Enderby)
- 3 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge

SOUTH

- 1 Jeffer's Fryzz
- 2 Burger 55
- 3 Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro (Summerland)

BEST FISH & CHIPS

CENTRAL

- 1 Shady Rest British Fish & Chips
- 2 Hooked on Seafood
- 2 Lord Chumley's Fish & Chips
- 3 C—Lovers Fish & Chips

NORTH

- 1 C—Lovers Fish & Chips
- 2 Joey's Only Seafood Restaurant
- 3 Fisherman Direct Seafoods (Enderby)

SOUTH

- 1 Cozy Bay Seafood Café (Summerland)
- 2 Jeffer's Fryzz
- 3 Buy The Sea Seafood Market

BEST BAKERY

CENTRAL

- 1 Tripke Bakery
- 2 Bliss Bakery Bistro (Peachland)

- 2 Okanagan Grocery Artisan Breads
- 3 Matterhorn Bakery (West Kelowna)

NORTH

- 1 Sweet Caroline's Bakery
- 2 Country Bakery (Armstrong)
- 3 Okanagan Bakehouse

SOUTH

- 1 Blue Icing Dessert Bar
- 1 Cobs Bread
- 2 Renaissance Bakery
- 2 The Cake Box Bakery (Summerland)

BEST DESSERT

CENTRAL

- 1 RauDZ Regional Table
- 2 Bouchon's Bistro
- 2 Moxie's Classic Grill
- 3 Milestones Grill & Bar

NORTH

- 1 ORA Restaurant Lounge
- 2 The Brown Derby Café (Armstrong)
- 3 Intermezzo Restaurant

SOUTH

- 1 Blue Icing Dessert Bar
- 1 The Sweet Tooth (Summerland)
- 2 Amante Bistro

**BEST ICE CREAM/
GELATO/FROZEN YOGURT**

CENTRAL

- 1 Moo-Lics
- 2 Dairy Queen
- 3 Marble Slab Creamery

NORTH

- 1 Marble Slab Creamery
- 2 Dairy Queen
- 3 The Garden Ice Cream Parlour

SOUTH

- 1 Tickleberry's (Okanagan Falls)
- 2 The Sweet Tooth (Summerland)
- 3 Osoyoos Gelato (Osoyoos)

**BEST WINERY
RESTAURANT**

CENTRAL

- 1 Grapevine Restaurant (Gray Monk Estate Winery)
- 2 Old Vine's Restaurant (Quails Gate Estate Winery)
- 3 Summerhill Sunset Bistro (Summerhill Pyramid Winery)

SOUTH

- 1 The Patio at Lake Breeze (Lake Breeze Estate Winery)
- 2 The Sonora Room Restaurant (Burrowing Owl Estate Winery)

- 3 Cellar Door Bistro (Sumac Ridge Estate Winery)

BEST WINE LIST

CENTRAL

- 1 RauDZ Regional Table
- 2 Ricardo's Mediterranean Kitchen
- 3 La Bussola
- 3 Wild Apple

NORTH

- 1 ORA Restaurant Lounge
- 1 The Italian Kitchen Company
- 2 Tita's Italian Bistro
- 3 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge

SOUTH

- 1 The Hooded Merganser
- 2 Local Lounge · Grille (Summerland)
- 3 Victoria Rd Deli & Bistro (Summerland)

BEST COCKTAILS

CENTRAL

- 1 RauDZ Regional Table
- 2 Joey Kelowna
- 3 Cabana Bar & Grille
- 3 Cactus Club Café
- 3 Eldorado Dining Room

NORTH

- 1 Earl's Restaurant & Lounge
- 2 The Phoenix & Lounge
- 3 ORA Restaurant Lounge

SOUTH

- 1 Barking Parrot
- 2 Local Lounge · Grille (Summerland)
- 3 The Hooded Merganser

BEST LOCAL WHITE

VALLEYWIDE

- 1 Pinot Gris (Wild Goose Vineyards)
- 2 Pinot Gris (Gray Monk Estate Winery)
- 3 2008 Viognier (La Frenz Winery)

BEST LOCAL RED

VALLEYWIDE

- 1 2006 Merlot (Burrowing Owl Estate Winery)
- 2 2006 Reserve Cabernet Franc (Hester Creek Estate Winery)
- 3 Latitude 50 (Gray Monk Estate Winery) **OL**



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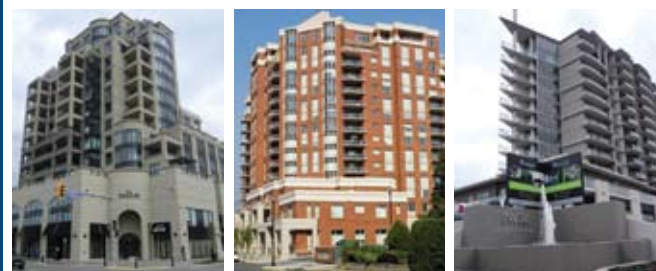
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by Dona Sturmanis

farm fresh city style

City dwellers longing for fresh flavours, chemical-free nutrition and the sheer joy of watching tiny seedlings grow into lunch are finding new ways to scale their agricultural skills to the urban landscape through small plot intensive farming and community gardens



new SPIN on farming

“If you walked down your average street in Kelowna,” says Curtis Stone, “you’d see that there’s enough land to produce food for all the people who live there.” Curtis is a city farmer with a vision. Last year, the 30-year-old started Green City Acres, a unique business that he feels will be financially lucrative and also make a socially and environmentally positive impact. Essentially, he’s creating garden plots on five different urban properties lent by their owners in return for produce. Curtis also plans to sell his crop to a variety of customers including restaurants.

His first and largest mini-farm is a double-lot property located on the corner of Ethel and Saucier with over 6,000 square feet of production, on which he has recently built a greenhouse. Among all his different sites, Curtis has cobbled together a total of 11,000 square feet of arable land.

“I’ve always been interested in social change, always tried to eat organic,” he says.

But with an education in music, nine years experience as a tree planter and no farming background, the learning curve has been steep.

“This is my first year of farming, so the planning has taken twice as long,” he says. “I’ve had to order my seeds, make maps of all my urban plots, decide what’s going to go in each bed and then figure out how much I’m going to grow, how much I’m going to sell, what my customers want. I had no idea it was going to be this much work.”

Curtis heard about Small Plot Intensive (SPIN) farming through a friend. Originated by Wally Satzewich and Gail Vandersteen of Saskatoon, it’s an inexpensive, low-tech, organic method of produce gardening in the city, making income from small plots of land that are rented or bartered from their owners. Buying land and raising capital are not an issue.

Wally and Gail have been practicing their method in Saskatoon for years, selling produce from three crops a season. They also claim urban SPIN gardens have fewer pests, better wind protection and a longer growing season than conventional gardens. The concept has become highly popular throughout North America, and praised for its sustainability and ability to generate cash.

“I met people SPIN farming and was amazed at how profitable it could be,” says Curtis. “I

CODY THOMPSON IS PART OF A GROWING MOVEMENT OF SMALL PLOT INTENSIVE (SPIN) FARMERS WHO TURN BITS OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE INTO PRODUCTIVE MINI-FARMS

PHOTO BY DANIEL HAYDUK

needed a job I could be passionate about and make a difference at the same time.”

Curtis sees urban farming as “a real tool for social and environmental change. It’s a way to get people back to nature—our society has disconnected so much.” It also helps, he says, that city produce farmers can save money, growing as much as “\$700 or more in 100 square feet of plot.”

SPIN gardening is an alternative to community gardens, which often have a waiting list, he says. He’s currently building a website with a section where people looking for a garden plot can connect with those who have land available to offer. “It’s a way to tie people together.”

Curtis isn’t the only urban farmer in Kelowna. His friend Cody Thompson, also passionate about the social and environmental benefits of urban farming, is starting his own SPIN concept business, Community Greens. His several producing plots in the Kelowna area, total close to 11,000 square feet or about a quarter of an acre.

“I thought it was a great idea for people to let others use their backyards to grow vegetables and then get vegetables in return,” he says. “The timing is right and everyone is starting to wake up and become aware of what we’re up against with global warming and food and water shortages.”

Cody is another farming newbie. He worked as an electrician at the Coast, but after sustaining a serious personal injury and doing a lot of travelling, he decided it was time to reassess life. “The idea came to produce good food and get into agriculture. This kind of farming is accessible to the younger generation.”

ONLINE RESOURCES

www.greencityacres.blogspot.com

www.communitygreens.ca

www.spinfarming.com

CURTIS STONE GETS INTO THE EARLY SEASON WORK, WATERING SMALL PLANTS IN THE GREENHOUSE HE’S BUILT, TILLING AND PLANTING ON LAND IN KELOWNA HE BARTERS FOR PART OF HIS CROP



“It’s a way to get people back to nature...our society has disconnected so much.”





urban agriculture

Community gardens are literally a growing phenomenon in the Okanagan. Many are sponsored by municipalities, but more and more are also cropping up at apartment complexes and seniors residences. They're cultivated for produce, flowers or anything else that can be planted, most often, by keen green thumbs who don't have access to a garden of their own. The resulting crop can be for individual use, shared, sold or donated.

Often developed on donated private or public land, community gardens are divided into plots of various sizes—some in raised beds (less bending, great for seniors)—and they aren't just restricted to terra firma. Gardens can grow just as well on rooftops or in boxes. Seasonal usage fees for space in public gardens range from \$10 to \$40 and guidelines include no pesticides and no picking other people's produce.

Community gardens provide many benefits: fresh, healthy, local produce (think 100-mile diet) at a cost less than the store, a rewarding fingers-in-the-dirt experience, social interaction, exercise, and the opportunity to learn gardening and cultivation skills.

On the environmental balance sheet, they reduce carbon footprints (fewer emissions from delivery trucks bringing in produce from elsewhere), restore oxygen to the atmosphere, help reduce air pollution and create organic compost.

Community gardens don't cost a lot to set up. All it

takes is some sweat equity, compost, good soil, seeds and an organized group of green thumbs.



Grandmother of Gardens

Possibly the oldest community garden in the Valley is run by the Penticton Community Garden Society. It used to be the garden of Carol Allen, the society's president, who says a group of people "clubbed

AVID GREEN THUMBS AND GARDENING NEWBIES WHO DON'T HAVE A PLOT OF THEIR OWN GET THEIR FINGERS IN THE SOIL AND GROW FRESH LOCAL PRODUCE IN COMMUNITY GARDENS THROUGHOUT THE VALLEY

LARGE PHOTO BY NEIL HANSEN, SMALLER PHOTO BY TARA ALBAS

together” to start the garden, located near the Penticton Art Gallery.

Carol is fervently enthusiastic about the concept. “I believe that leased gardens, community or allotments, are the unstoppable wave of the future,” she says. “People are too conscious of travel miles, pesticide use, agro-biz, local cache, sustainability, ethical practices, the carbon footprint and just plain tomatoes that taste like tomatoes to entirely settle for supermarket fare



more community and allotment spaces opened for community gardens,” says Carol. “Schools have enormous, unused swaths of lawn that could so easily be converted to this whole new learning experience, as do churches, retirement homes and many offices.”

Gardens Galore

“More people living in multi-family apartments don’t have gardens,” says Ruth Mellor, chair of Central Okanagan Community Gardens (COCG). The non-profit organization oversees seven gardens from West Kelowna to Lake Country, all of which have volunteer coordinators. Ruth

ADVOCATES SUGGEST UNUSED SWATHS OF LAWN IN SCHOOL GROUNDS, CHURCHES, RETIREMENT HOMES AND OFFICES COULD BE CONVERTED TO PRODUCTIVE GARDEN SPACE



from here in. We want to dabble our fingers in our own soil and boast that this is our own lettuce.”

Open to anyone living in Penticton, Kaleden or Naramata, this garden hosts every imaginable vegetable from asparagus to zucchini, along with herbs, soft fruits and flowers. “There’s a welcome trend towards growing more heirloom varieties each year,” Carol adds.

Interest among locals is steadily increasing. “Not so long ago, it was a real struggle to lease all the plots but we’ve made substantial improvements in recent years,” says Carol. “This year, for the first time, it seems very likely we won’t be able to accommodate all the people on the wait list.”

The local Katimavik volunteer youth group helps maintain the garden’s lush wildflower hillside in return for a plot to “learn the craft and feed the household.”

“I should like to see many

estimates there are approximately 240 plots used by as many as 1,000 people counting individuals, couples, families and groups. Each of the seven gardens has a waiting list.

“People want to know what’s going into their food, and how it was grown,” she says. “Community gardens also form a community within a community. They’re about far more than just growing our own food. They’re about people helping each other, getting to know each other.”

Ruth, who is also chair of the volunteer board and coordinator of Barlee Garden, located on Barlee Road near Orchard Plaza, says anybody can use their gardens. “We don’t restrict who has a plot. There’s a full range. At Barlee, it’s about half older people. Groups like Seniors Outreach and Kelowna Community Living Society have plots. Different personalities are attracted to different gardens.”

All three Central Okanagan municipalities — Kelowna, Lake Country and West Kelowna — are supportive of community gardens, as are the other Valley communities that have them.

“Kelowna encourages community gardens although there is no policy that requires them,” says city councillor Angela Reid. “I’d like to see them as part of a green space requirement for multi-family projects. They’re a great way to produce healthy food and get people together.” She laughs, “Some of the councillors and I have gotten together with the idea of turning the

front lawn of City Hall into a community garden.”

COCG has inspired community gardens all around the Okanagan, and members have advised groups in Oliver, Vernon and Rose Valley who are starting their own.

“Once you get a garden going, it doesn’t cost a lot,” says Ruth. “There’s always good community assistance and support from local businesses.”

Learning from the Land

Students of Oliver Elementary School have developed hands-on skills to grow healthy, safe produce in a sustainable manner thanks to Oliver’s first community garden, started in the spring of 2009. Last year they tended three of the 33 plots.

With a grant from Interior Health, Oliver Community Gardens Society contracted a teacher to visit the elementary school classrooms and teach students about growing a garden. “They learned how to grow seeds,” says society coordinator Judy Harvey. “Each class also had a worm garden and compost where they brought salad wastes.”

The results — tomatoes, lettuce, beets, peppers and zucchini — all donated to the local food bank.

This year, the population of student gardeners is expanding with the addition of kids from Tuc-el-nuit Elementary and a class from Oliver Senior Secondary.

The rest of the Oliver plots are used “by people all over the map,” says Judy. “Young adults with children, seniors, many who don’t have the luxury of being able to plant.

Help from a Regional District

Healthy food fans in Vernon knew community gardens could help improve local nutrition in 2007 when they were recommended by the North Okanagan Food Action Coalition in a food security assessment and action plan. This resulted in a pilot garden at East Hill in 2008 and funding for future garden development. Further endorsement by the new Food Action Society of the North Okanagan also helped.

“We’re motivated to set up a network because we see community gardens as contributing to systems that provide people with access to healthy, real food,” says Wendy Aason, organization coordinator. “It serves to reconnect us with our food and all of those other benefits that come with gardening as a community.”

On February 10, the Regional District of the North Okanagan presented a policy that provides impressive assistance ranging from tenure on public land for approved gardens to signage and even portable toilets. One time start up grants for new gardens of up to \$2,500 are also available.

Wendy says, “The reason we approached the Regional District is because we wanted a regional policy to facilitate some more gardens at a neighbourhood level. We’re working out the bugs, learning as we go, but at the end of the day, we walk away knowing they’re being supported at the municipal level.”

“It serves to reconnect us with our food and all of those other benefits that come with gardening as a community”



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



ST. PAUL GARDEN IN KELOWNA, OPERATED BY CENTRAL OKANAGAN COMMUNITY GARDENS (LEFT); BUILDING GARDEN BOXES AND HARVESTING CROPS IN ARMSTRONG'S FLEDGLING GARDEN

Besides the East Hill Garden on private land shared with Silver Star Elementary School, a garden at the Pleasant Valley Church of God was started last year and a third one is planned on former school grounds.

"We have a real mix of users," says Wendy. "Some families, retirees; some live near and far, some live in apartments. The majority are avid gardeners. Everyone has their own style and way of doing things, as long as it works."

Square Metre Gardening

There are five raised community garden beds at the Peachland Wellness Centre. Three feet off the ground, they're intended to attract older folks who might be uncomfortable bending down, says Wendy Howard, program coordinator for the centre.

As well as seniors, a variety of people cultivate these plots, however Wendy reports the garden is not as well used as it could be. To help remedy the situation and attract more seniors, she is applying to Interior Health for a grant to convert the plots into what is known as square foot or square metre gardening, which reduces the size of the planting areas "into little wee squares."

She's very enthusiastic because square metre gardening has many benefits. "You don't have to change what's there, just buy a special mix for a one-time output, and you'll never have to replace the soil again, just put in compost," says Wendy. "You water by hand to save on watering, practice crop rotation, protect the garden from rodents and deer. It's very exciting."

Other Okanagan community gardens are following suit as well.

The Gleaning Garden

The Armstrong Community Garden was started last year with a \$10,000 grant from the Union of BC Municipalities and is located on land donated by the city behind the caboose near the traffic lights at Highway 97.

"It was rather amazing to see how much produce came from this little plot of land," says Rea Smith, who was involved in the formation of the garden. "Hundreds of pounds of potatoes and other root crops, many bushels of tomatoes, peppers and squash, and a lot of green foods such as lettuce and kale."

With gardeners ranging in age from two to 87 years old, Rea says, "a lot of mentoring happened, which contributed to the feeling of community that grew along with the vegetables."

One of the most impressive activities she describes was the Monday morning gleaning and sharing. Anyone in town with extra produce could bring it to the garden between 9:00 and 10:30, and from 10:30 to noon, anyone who needed food could come and pick it up for free.

"Our gleaning group also went out and picked fruits and vegetables offered to us. Through this exchange a lot of people learned about what was happening in the community garden and some of the recipients of free food signed up for a garden plot for this year." **OL**



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- Garlic Tiger Prawns
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- P&Q Combo Platter

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ENTREE HIGHLIGHTS

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- Tea Smoked West Coast Salmon, Wasabi Mash Potato Spring Roll, Seasonal Vegetables



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ENTREE HIGHLIGHTS

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Zias Stonehouse Restaurant opened its doors in 1998, after a year of renovations that transformed the old heritage building into an Italianate utopia. Zias is soaked with atmosphere which suits both casual and elegant dining. The outstanding menu is complemented by an impressive wine list which features over 75 local wines. Thank you to the readers of Okanagan Life for voting us one of the "Best of the Okanagan" 11 years in a row!

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Tucked away on a quiet road just outside Kelowna, Ricardo's creates gratifying authentic dishes echoing from the Italian countryside and the Mediterranean basin. From mamma's hand rolled meatballs to organic produce grown in the family garden, chef-owner Ricardo Scabba honours his Italian heritage and serves favourite family recipes that offer a true taste of Mediterranean life. Ricardo was named Top Chef of 2010. Open 7 nights a week, with live music on Thursday's, patio dining, ample parking and take out.

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By Michael Botner

Wine provides a sensuous experience involving not just the obvious smell

and taste, but also sight. Although individual sensitivity to light will cause slight variations in what each person sees, it is possible to make valid generalizations. A wine's appetizing appearance—dark ruby or brilliant yellow-gold—can do wonders to stimulate the taste buds. Dull, off-colours, turbidity or lack of brightness can condemn a wine to oblivion even before smelling or tasting. For best effect, experienced tasters like to use clean, clear glass, a white background and a good light source—preferably natural daylight or filtered tungsten lamps rather than fluorescent.

The colour in wine comes mainly from the grape skins and oxidation through aging. The red pigment of wine grapes (called anthocyanin) along with tannin, derives from extraction during fermentation.

Here is a quick guide: thick-skinned varieties, grown in iron rich soil, in cooler climate regions and fermented in contact with skins for longer and at higher temperatures, yield wine with a deeper hue.

The colour of wine evolves with aging in oak barrels and bottles. With reds, as pigments are precipitated with aging, colours get less intense, gradually passing from deep red through ruby and brick to mahogany. Whites that start out straw yellow move to golden, then brown with age through oxidation. To test the impact of colour on your wine tasting experience, try this experiment. Start with three wines: a low acidity white, a rosé and a low tannin red. Blindfold yourself. Have an assistant pass you each of the three wines for tasting. Can you tell them apart?



WINE TASTING 101: COLOUR

If red, white and pink is all you know about wine colour, a rainbow of nuances is waiting for you to explore

The Reviews

This selection of sparkling wines is made in different styles and with a variety of methods for creating bubbles. The five-star rating system stresses value for price.



Cipes Bateman GTK Series Rosé N/V

Kelowna ★★★★★ (\$29.95)

Made by the classic Champagne method from organic Okanagan Valley Pinot Noir grapes, this charming dry bubbly boasts vibrant flavours of strawberry, grapefruit and crisp apple with a hint of toasty richness. Pairs with turkey, lamb, pork and Asian cuisine.

Where to get it: Summerhill Pyramid Winery, LRS and VQA stores.



Jaillance Muscat Clairette de Die Tradition BIO N/V

Drôme Valley, France ★★★1/2 (\$25.81)

Low alcohol, naturally sparkling wine made with organic grapes by "méthode ancestrale." Fun, frilly and floral, this is a candy box exuding flavours of gummy bear, Granny Smith, Sprite, cantaloupe, green lime peel and lavender. Partners apple pie with ice cream.

Where to get it: BC Liquor Stores (Signature stores) and select fine wine retailers.



Bastianich Flor Prosecco N/V

Veneto, Italy ★★★1/2 (\$19.99)

Charmat method sparkler in which second fermentation takes place in pressurized tanks. Dry and fruity, it exhibits flavours of yeast, apple, peach and melon with clean acidity and a note of bitter almond on the finish. Perfect with antipasti.

Where to get it: BC Liquor Stores (Signature stores).

the profile



STEPHEN CIPES

Proprietor,
Summerhill Pyramid Winery

Seeking a cleaner environment for his four boys, New Yorker Stephen Cipes arrived in the Okanagan in 1986. But when they moved into a house in the middle of a vineyard, he was shocked to discover that chemicals were being sprayed to kill weeds and pests. "It ends up in the lake and goes right into our drinking water," he says. The spraying stopped and Steve went on to establish Summerhill, Canada's largest organic winery.

Steve is always looking to innovate. "We have joined forces with Royal Roads University to develop rootstocks that use considerably less water," he says. An advocate of permaculture, environmental self-sufficiency, he stresses the importance of "balancing nature so nature wins. With a dry climate and cool nights, we have the ideal conditions here for growing vines organically and sustainably."

Summerhill specializes in sparkling wine. Aging the wine in the pyramid cellar combines Steve's holistic leanings with his vision of making the best bubbly in the world. Many great Champagne houses age their wines in ancient Roman arch cellars built with the same geometric precision.

Does it work? Summerhill was named Canadian Wine Producer of the Year at the 2009 International Wine and Spirits Competition in London, England, for its portfolio of organic wines.

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A bicycle is about getting out of the car, it is about getting away from the TV and Internet. It's about hearing the

ring of an old-fashioned bike bell instead of the annoying ring of a cell phone (...OK that may be pushing it a little too far.) Sure, people say it's about getting in shape and staying fit, but it's also about personal rejuvenation, time spent on a mountain bike with friends riding the trails in East Kelowna or with family cruising the Mission Greenway. Whatever your style of riding, there is a style of bike that will fit you. The staff at Kelowna Cycle is always happy to get you out from behind the steering wheel of your car and behind the handlebars.



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by Patti Shales Lefkos

I'm settled on the narrow seat. My fingers barely stretch around the roughly hewn oar handles. Foot brace adjusted to my leg length, I push with my bare toes and pull with all my five-year-old power.

The maroon-trimmed, battleship grey wooden boat, hand built by a local farmer, glides slowly away from my grandparents' Ontario island dock. Bursting with pride, proceeding with questionable skill, I row in the general direction of my family's cottage on another island 400 metres away. My grandmother follows in a second boat, coaching me all the way.

So, a rower most of my life, I approach the Swan Lake Vernon Rowing and Paddling Centre with somewhat inflated confidence. How different can it be rowing in a shell?

I find out.

Petite, blue-eyed Lisa George, centre manager and one of the coaches, greets me with a warm smile perfected in hospitality work in her native Sydney, Australia. Before long she has me seated on a rowing machine outdoors on the >>>



ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT, LEFT HAND OVER RIGHT

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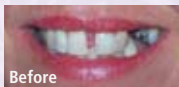
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grass with a great view of the lake. That's as close as she's willing to take me to the water at this point.

Settled on a second machine beside me she coaches me through the phases of the rowing stroke: catch, drive, release, recovery. Feet in the stirrups, legs bent, I grip the handle. "Try to keep your hands relaxed," says Lisa.

Easy for you.

Arms extended, I start with the catch phase, pulling the handle toward me at chest level, then straighten my legs for the drive. "It's all about the legs," she says. "Keep your back straight, pivot over the hips, push with the legs and feel the power."

All I feel is awkward, precariously perched on the sliding mini seat — hardly as sturdy as my Ontario rowboat. The release and recovery phase are brief and just as challenging to time correctly.

Lisa models correct technique beside me. Despite the spring breeze, I'm starting to sweat. This rowing requires focus. I struggle to remember the sequence — and breathe. The ergometer, a device on the machine to measure the amount of work performed, reads a steady 50. I'm stoked — until Lisa mentions that members of the national men's team try to keep it at 1,000. Ten minutes later we're warmed up and ready to go.

Armed with my new mantra — catch, drive, release, recovery — I follow Lisa to the dock where her husband, Martin, the Interior regional development coach for Rowing BC, is steadying a two person shell for us. "The boat will feel wobbly at first. That's natural," Martin says.

He warns me not to step in the bottom. "Some racing shells are so fragile they can be damaged with a finger nail," he warns. While this lesson boat is clearly more robust, I remove my shoes as instructed and enter bum first placing one socked foot on the sign saying, "Step here."

As we push away from



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PATTI RECALLS HER MANTRA LEFT HAND HIGH AS SHE POSITIONS HERSELF FOR ANOTHER STROKE. FINGERLESS CYCLING GLOVES PROVIDE WARMTH AND ALLOW FOR GOOD GRIP ON THE OAR

the dock I ask Lisa the water temperature. “About 15 degrees Celsius,” she says. “But just because the boat feels tippy doesn’t mean we’ll overturn. The oars are vital to balance. Remember the rest position, hands gently by the chest, oars flat on the surface.” The oars settle the unstable feeling. That’s advice I won’t forget.

The sequence was difficult enough on land, when the worst consequence was falling off onto the grass, but now we’re skimming the surface of Swan Lake in the 34-foot Rolling River shell weighing only 60 pounds. Lisa seems relaxed. Not me. Concentration is crucial.

Martin follows and coaches from the support boat armed with life jackets. As in my cottage rowboat the oars overlap so one hand pulls slightly above the other. No problem, I think, until I realize this boat is set for the left hand to be high and I have 50 years of practice keeping my right hand up. Several bruised fingers and involuntary hip wiggles later I begin to get the hang of it.

Add to the mantra — left hand high. Bingo. It all comes together. Four or five smooth strokes in a row and I feel the power. I could be good at this if I signed up for the usual five lessons. The Zen meditation of body, mind and spirit united on the serene surface, surrounded by the green, grassy hills of the Okanagan spring. “We like to think of it as our little Tuscany,” says Lisa.

The clubhouse and five grassy shoreline acres on Swan Lake are owned by a local doctor who donates use of

INSTRUCTOR LISA GEORGE PREPARES TO FASTEN THE OAR IN THE OARLOCK



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the land, the perfect location for various rowing and social events hosted annually by the club.

The Corporate Team Rowing Challenge, touted as team building at its best, is a fundraiser for youth rowing programs. Groups of four learn and train together over two weeks, then compete in a final regatta racing head to head over 500 metres. The highly sought after prize? A paddle blade with the name of your team adorning the walls of the paddle shack.

“The boat will feel wobbly at first. That’s natural.”

For those looking for an introductory activity there's the Lap of the Lake in June. “It can be as competitive or as fun as you want to make it,” Lisa says. Use of equipment for a lake lap and barbecue lunch: all for \$15.

Lisa is passionate about the club's adaptive rowing program. She explains that the shells can be fitted with stabilizing scullies to ensure total safety. The philosophy is, “everyone can row.” There are no barriers in this sport.

Vernon Rowing and Paddling Club started 15 years ago. There are now 50 permanent members, 30 drop-in rowers and 16 in the adaptive program, aged nine to seniors.

Martin and Lisa are enthusiastic about introducing others to the sport. Five lessons and anyone can be part of the crew. “But we're not here just to run people through the system,” Lisa says. “We're here to turn people into rowers for life.” **OL**

TIPS

- Wear comfortable sports cloths, in layers, as you would for cycling or cross-country skiing.
- Take a towel and full change of clothes, just in case you dump.
- A cap with a brim, sunglasses and sunscreen are essential to avoid headache and sunburn from the sun's reflection on the water.
- Hit the gym. Try out the rowing machine. Ask for assistance, as proper mechanics are essential for back health.
- Be prepared for lots of information. Rowing is a technical sport. Don't get discouraged. A learn to row program will set you up for success.
- Invite a high school student along. Rowing scholarships are available at many Canadian universities.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Rowing is a lifelong health-enhancing sport that exercises all major muscle groups: legs, arms, back, abdominal and buttocks. It takes muscles through a wider range of motion giving greater flexibility and superior aerobic and strength conditioning. Rowing burns calories efficiently, is impact free, and fun, competitive or casual, indoors or out. Even a 10-minute workout provides a balance of fitness benefits.

IF YOU GO...

Vernon Rowing and Paddling Centre caters to every age and ability. The Adaptive Rowing Program welcomes all, regardless of physical or intellectual challenges. Open house sessions, where everyone gets on the water and learns the basics, are held the first Saturday of each month, 9 to 11 a.m., May to August.

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A DAY IN HIS LIFE

4:30 am

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5:00 am

CRAWL THROUGH BRUSH TO HELP LOCAL BIOLOGIST LOCATE NESTS. CHECK FOR VISITS FROM PREDATORS (SNAKES, ETC.) WEIGH AND BAND BIRDS, CHECK THEIR OVERALL HEALTH, TAKE BLOOD SAMPLES

8:30 am

SPEAK WITH ECOMMUNITY PLACE COORDINATOR CHAD ENEAS, HERE FOR WALK THROUGH PROPERTY. HELP CLEAN UP TRASH LEFT BY PARTIERS. ENSURE THEIR CAMPFIRE IS COMPLETELY EXTINGUISHED

PHOTO BY DAWN RENAUD

KEEPING THE KNOWLEDGE

The world view of the Okanagan peoples embraces a close relationship with the land. Preserving and sharing this wisdom is the life's work of traditional knowledge keeper Richard Armstrong

by Dawn Renaud

Richard Armstrong says if he wins the lottery, he knows just what he'll do with the money. Richard and I are walking the lands of ECOMmunity Place in Penticton and he's sharing his vast knowledge of things wild and natural. Stopping near a bush, he shows how the bark from its slender stem can be twisted into a pencil-thin rope so strong it can't be torn apart. Stripped to finer skeins, it makes thread. Treated with the oil from beneath the tail of a certain duck, it's good for fishing net. He points out a medicinal fungus growing on a cottonwood. In a warmer season we might follow a Behr's hairstreak butterfly; after feeding from antelope brush, it moves to another plant, then to the tufted stem of another medicinal plant so fine you're unlikely to find it unaided. Everything native to this land is both interconnected and purposeful.

An elder with the Penticton Indian Band, Richard is a traditional ecological knowledge keeper working for the En'owkin Centre's Syilx knowledge program. He describes how knowledge was given to the first people by their four "parent" tribes (land creatures, water creatures, air creatures and plants). This knowledge explained how all things interrelate for the well-being of the community—and how, in turn, a healthy community provides everything the people need to survive. "On every reserve throughout the nation," he says, "there's someone that has this knowledge passed down through the elders."

As a child, Richard spent much of his time on the land, learning from older family members and his surroundings. It's different from learning in a classroom, he explains. "You're just part of it; you're doing it, rather than being separate from it."

Richard speaks for the plants, birds and animals that can't speak for themselves. When they'll be displaced by development, it's his duty to inform decision makers and help find workable solutions. He's heartened by the increase in cooperation over the past few years. "It's not just a matter of saying, 'You can't do this,'" he says. Often developers simply revise their layouts to make it work.

ECOMmunity Place, however, is a special case. Less than a quarter mile wide by a mile long, the area's last good stand of black cottonwood is home to an amazing diversity of indigenous species, some among the most endangered in BC. Intruders—Russian olive, under which nothing grows, English ivy and Virginia creeper, capable of choking out wild >>>

10:00 am

MEET GRADE 5 GROUP FROM LOCAL SCHOOL. TALK ABOUT LAND AND HOW WE'RE CONNECTED. EXPLAIN OWL AND HARLEQUIN DUCK BOXES, IDENTIFY TRACKS, WATCH RED-TAIL HAWK CATCH RODENTS FOR YOUNG

1:00 pm

GRADE 9 SCHOOL GROUP ARRIVES WITH SEEDLINGS TO HELP REGENERATE NATIVE SPECIES. POINT OUT INVASIVE SPECIES TO BE ERADICATED AND FIND PLACES TO PLANT SEEDLINGS

3:30 pm

RETURN TO EN'OWKIN CENTRE. CHECK EMAIL AND PHONE MESSAGES. ANSWER QUERY FROM UNDERGRAD BIOLOGY STUDENT, AGREEING TO ASSIST WITH RESEARCH FOR THESIS

3:45 pm

MEET WITH CENTRE DIRECTOR. REVIEW SCHEDULES AND ENROLMENT FOR THIS FALL'S SYILX LANGUAGE CLASSES (TO TEACH FULL DAYS HERE MONDAYS AND TUESDAYS; UBC-O ON FRIDAYS)

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PENTICTON INDIAN BAND ELDER RICHARD ARMSTRONG WILLINGLY SHARES HIS VAST KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS WILD AND NATURAL

raspberries and overpowering massive cottonwoods — already wreak havoc with the natural order of things. Eradicating these and replanting native species is an ongoing process.

It's also an expensive one. Under the provisions of locatee ownership, this land can either be sold among band members or leased to other parties. The current owners are aware that it's prime land for high priced homes and golf courses, but instead lease it to ECOMMUNITY and the En'owkin Centre. "We fund-raise all year long to pay the lease to leave it in its natural state," says Richard. "If I won the 6/49 I would pay the lease for this or outright buy it and protect it forever."

Breaking off a showy milkweed pod, Richard shows me how, as children, they fashioned these into waterfowl. They're replanting milkweed to encourage the reproduction of Monarch butterflies; it's their sole food source during the

caterpillar stage. He recalls a visiting biologist who was certain Richard had mistaken a more common Viceroy for the elusive Monarch. Setting out to obtain photographic evidence, he discovered that Richard was right.

Another biologist, when cautioned that a beaver had destabilized an area of riverbank, insisted they lodged only on water. Disregarding Richard's assurance that elderly beavers sometimes burrow in the bank, the biologist collapsed into the den. "His hip waders filled with water," says Richard, who helped him out. "We had to dig them out separately."

Richard seems serenely unperturbed by this kind of academic snobbery. Most people come to learn and he's happy to oblige, tailoring his talk to audiences ranging from scientists to schoolchildren. "Getting the word out there is what I like to be all about — telling everybody, here's what it is, here's why we're doing this," he says. "Come on over and have a look at it." **OL**

PHOTO BY DAWN RENAUD

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nextISSUE

● **LOST & FOUND**

In this penetrating feature one senior's quest for mental health reveals a range of complex issues and some disturbing facts about our health care system.

● **VALLEY TOURISM**

Explore the love/hate relationship between Okanaganites and an industry that produces undeniable economic benefit but also causes its share of headaches and concerns.



by Ryan Uchman

TALKIN' 'BOUT A REVOLUTION

Spirited ruminations of a word weary wino

I love it when wine columnists use obscure words to describe wines. Do you think they used those same power adjectives — words like exuberant and brooding — when they started their wine journey years ago with a burger in one hand and a huge twist-capped bottle of some blended hot dog meat wine in the other? I'm guessing not. They probably started the same way we all did — they tasted the wine and categorized it as either good or bad. But somehow, over time, they lose their way.

“...having a hint of old, worn out boot leather on the finish.”

I specifically remember one column, which credited a Merlot with having a hint of old, worn out boot leather on the finish. I don't know about you, but I can't think of a single time in my life when I craved a glass of old, worn out boot leather.

“Hey honey, these old boots have had it. Why don't we throw them in the blender with some rum and lime juice and make us some old, worn out boot leather margaritas?” How can something that sounds so absurd seem so acceptable when it comes to wine?

What makes matters worse is that for far too long, middle-of-the-road wine drinkers have felt pressured by columnists to taste that old, worn out boot leather and maybe a hint of barnyard, only to be left with the remorse of having somehow failed after tasting neither.

I remember a while ago saying to myself, “I didn't taste any of the things I'm supposed to have tasted, do I deserve to be drinking this?”

Why must we taste barnyard? For that matter, why would I want to taste barnyard?

Quite simply, we all have different palates, and like a piece of abstract art or some 3D image, what you get may not be what others get. Let's not chastise ourselves, people.

After all, isn't booze supposed to be something that relaxes us and not stresses us out?

If you like something, then it's good. It's as simple as that!

What we need are columnists that give us the low down without all the pomp and pageantry. Is it oaked or unoaked? Is it dry or sweet? Will it go well with chicken? Will it leave that furry feeling in my mouth? Stuff like that. If I wanted flowery adjectives, I'd go read some of my niece's love letters. What I do want is the same thing most of you want. I just want someone to tell me what wine I should pick up on my way home from work that won't be a waste of 15 bucks. Is that really so hard? Thankfully for all of us, websites such as Wines That Don't Blow! have heeded our call and help is on the way. Check it out (shameless self-promotion). **OL**



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