

BC Restaurant News

JUNE 2001 \$4.95

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA RESTAURANT & FOODSERVICES ASSOCIATION

**The Ten
Commandments
of a Food Critic**
Jamie Maw Dishes Out

**Super
Summer Sippers**

bcrfa

British Columbia Restaurant & Foodservices Association



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Bill of Fare...

BC Restaurant News
JUNE 2001
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Features

16 Super Summer Sippers

By Duncan Holmes

The nights are warmer, the days are longer and the patios are filled with throngs of the thirsty. From martini mainstays to adventures in chilled Thai coffee, everyone has a favourite summer libation.

18 Cashing In on Tourism

By Judith Lane

In 1999, there were close to 23 million overnight visitors in British Columbia and every single one of them had a bite to eat. Those bites can add tidy profits to any operation – if you know how to cash in on the tourism wave. Location is key, but creative restaurateurs know what brings the tourists to the table.

28 Stars Shine Bright in Victorian Night

Vancouver Island is a culinary epicentre unto itself, offering up tremendous fresh product prepared by some of the province's top chefs. The 11th Annual Night of the Stars celebration in Victoria, brought together the Island's top students, restaurateurs and chefs for a star-studded night at the Fairmont Empress in May.

On Our Cover

20 Critics' Choice: The 10 Commandments of Food Criticism

They have seen it all: the good, the bad and the hard to swallow. Their words never go unread and what they have to say may impact your business. They are food critics and they want you to succeed. Jamie Maw, the Food Editor of Vancouver Magazine, sits down and dishes up what he's looking for in your restaurant.

Cover photography by Jason McRobbie

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A Summer of Change



I recently had the opportunity to travel to Europe and spend some time exploring beautiful country sides and busy cities. It was another world, filled with different faces, different customs and different qualities of life. I have come home to a British Columbia that is changing rapidly... a new government... a new direction... and the firm belief that life is about to get a lot better... for all of us... and for our industry.

We have high hopes for Premier Gordon Campbell and I would like to take the time to congratulate those who helped communicate our industry's concerns & opportunities to

our new Premier. Let's keep those lines of communication open.

The tax cut is certainly a step in the right direction. As so many of you have experienced in your years in the industry, one of the first "extra money" expenses to go is "dining out"... so extra money in British Columbians' pockets means more business for everyone.

Are we ready for BC residents to spend more \$\$\$ in our businesses?

In my travels, both around the province as well as overseas, I never fail to appreciate the attention to customer service that some restaurants possess and share so willingly. It really makes the difference and is always noticed... the warm smile... the attentive service... the way a good meal can make you feel better wherever you are.

Of course, this type of customer service does not come easily, and once achieved must be maintained. The summer months mean more tourists and more employees. Make sure that none of your guests can pick out your new employees... train them well and they will serve you and your customers well in return.

For some of your employees, this will be their first summer of work. For others, it marks a return after previous experiences. Training is always important... never more so than when you have large numbers of new staff and larger numbers of guests to be served. With the right training, we will all add a few regular guests to our bottom lines and introduce another student to the workforce... and the hospitality industry.

We all tend to eat out more during the warmer months, but it's not just the locals you should expect to see. This season, don't be surprised to see more tourists journeying further into our province than ever before. Tourism numbers continue to climb and many of our visitors come every year, travelling to different destinations each time... and probably come to eat with you shortly... let's make sure we are ready for them.

We deserve the very best that this new economy has to offer and from speaking with many of you over the past months, I know we are all ready. Moreover, we deserve it. The trials and tribulations we have suffered over the past number of years will not mean a thing if we did not learn from them. Putting what we've learned to use in a strong new economy will only bring even greater success.

I wish you all the best this summer.

Simon Evans
 President, BCRFA



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Canadian Gothic (or Why I'm Fired-Up for Summer)



There is something about summer that brings out my "Canadian Gothic" side, or maybe it's my inner caveman. Regardless, I feel the compulsion to drive for hours in almost any direction, so long as it takes me to the middle of nowhere. The more nowhere, the better... but running water, a nearby supermarket and some place to grab the Saturday Vancouver Sun are also part of the equation.

We spend the day hiking, gathering wood (pre-cut from the 7-11 in Mission works quite nicely) and talking about what is for dinner. We read, we relax... but mostly we build fires, or at least I do. I build fires, blow on fires, keep fires going, put fires out. Fire plays a major role in the camping experience and this makes my knuckle scraping inner self very happy.

Elephants can find their way to ancestral burial grounds and watering holes and I portend that humans, the male of the species admittedly more so, are drawn to cooking over fire. While skill levels vary, there is an inherent ability to burn food items to variable degrees of accuracy over an open flame. Sure, we have a Hibatchi kicking around for the paella, but at heart, we are far more rustic and primal.

If the word "flame" is associated with a meal, food just calls to us. Think how good a "flame-broiled" hamburger sounds compared to a "patty of dubious meat content reheated in a microwave". See? Standing before the grill, drink of choice in one hand, spatula in another, we are all-powerful.

Standing before the camp fire though - drink of choice in one hand, hand-whittled fire stick in the other - we are close to godlike. It does not matter that this experience is being replicated in hundreds of parks across British Columbia, by thousands of other urban adventurers. It just feels right.

Finding more remote camping sites is a challenge as the world is waking up to the fact that British Columbia offers the perfect blend of urban culture and natural beauty. What makes weekends a bit more challenging for me, makes business better for all you. Journey to any campsite in British Columbia and you find yourself smack dab in the middle of a U.N. jamboree involving people of all ages. Of course, this is the end result of many things, including some savvy marketing by the folks at Tourism BC and you can cash in on this summer surge. Judith Lane explains just how on page 18.

Fortunately, I don't have Jamie Maw, the Food Editor of Vancouver Magazine, rating what comes out of my fry-pan, but I'm sure I'd receive "A" for effort. For those of you graded on more than effort, I sat down with Mr. Maw and extracted a veritable checklist for restaurateurs: the 10 commandments of food criticism.

Almost as important as flame is beverage. No summer experience is complete without the proper beverage. Summer seems to bring out the patio patois as servers everywhere struggle to contend with the constantly expanding bevy of summer beverages. From fruit-filled umbrages to cocktail umbrellas to the regal simplicity of the gin martini, the joys of summer have arrived. Duncan Holmes scooped the fun assignment this month and hit the patios in search of what is hot this season.

Regardless of how busy you are this summer, I encourage you to find the time to build a fire, sing a silly song and sleep beneath the stars. It is the truest reminder of why British Columbia is truly remarkable.

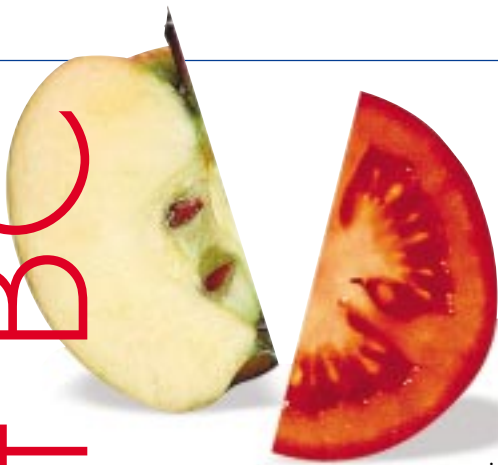
While you're at it, build a bigger fire.

Jason McRobbie – Editor, BCRN



dedicated to finding a cure

see "Paper Dragons" page 11



Apples for Asthmatics? Tea for Teeth?

The old saying about an apple a day might tend towards gross generalization, but according to researchers in England, an apple or a tomato a day, may help prevent asthma attacks. While the “protective ingredient” in the fruits has not been nailed down, a series of tests performed at the University of Nottingham showed that people eating more than five apples a week, or at least three tomatoes a week fared better in lung-function tests. Apples ranked highest, followed by tomatoes, followed by bananas.

Hot on the heels of the discovery that fruits are good for you, another piece of good news for the British was delivered by researchers from a U.S. dental college in Illinois. Drinking tea may help prevent cavities and gum disease and compounds in black tea are able to stop the build up of plaque. While this may seem like the build-up for a bad joke, their findings supported a Swedish study with similar findings.

Gimme Five... Keep the Ten

While imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, where money is concerned such imitation is more commonly referred to as counterfeiting. Unfortunately, Canada’s new \$10 bills are receiving a great deal of attention from would-be scam artists.

As of last month, over 140 fake \$10 bills were turned over to the Mounties and vigilance is the only true preventative measure. The RCMP are urging operators to educate themselves about the new bills which were launched in mid-January. While the bills were described by the Bank of Canada as containing “new sophisticated security features designed to thwart counterfeiters”, even a poor copy is easy to pass off if operators are not looking for a dupe.



Premier Comes to Roost at Vancouver’s First Swiss Chalet

With the election looming large, a campaigning Gordon Campbell found the time to officially open Vancouver’s first Swiss Chalet located in Kitsilano a stone’s throw from his campaign headquarters. A horde of media



Premier Gordon Campbell meets the neighbours in Kitsilano, as he is greeted by Swiss-Chalet’s Rob Hayes and the location’s Operating Associate Rebeckah Hassam.

followed now-Premier Campbell through the door and business has been brisk since. High profile openings aside, this new location at 3204 West Broadway is attracting a whole new market thanks to a shift in focus.

The new 6,500 square foot Swiss Chalet features a unique West Coast Contemporary atmosphere with 230 seats, ample parking, a patio, a take-out section and *Roost* Bar that runs the full length of the restaurant. It will also be the first Swiss Chalet to offer brunch on Saturdays and Sundays. As a result, this is not your grandmother’s Swiss Chalet. Gone are the octogenarian trappings, replaced by fresh new colours and decorative accents designed to put a new spin on an old favourite.

“This opening has been highly anticipated – we have been waiting for the perfect location in Vancouver for a number of years,” said Director of Operations Rob Hayes. “Swiss Chalet has invested \$1.5 million to bring this restaurant to the Vancouver area, and it will create 75 new jobs in the community.”

The Kitsilano location is the 10th Swiss Chalet in British Columbia, but the first to have this new format. Owned and operated by CARA Operations Ltd., the opening of the restaurant was preceded by two weeks of intensive employee training.

“We created 75 new jobs in the community and it is our responsibility to ensure that while the feel of the restaurant may be new and the food options are expanded, the same quality service is retained,” said Hayes. “We don’t want to lose our long time customers, but we are thrilled to see the interest in Swiss Chalet growing and will always make service, quality and price our top priorities.”



A Passion! For Fresh Ingredients

Fantastic flowers and culinary powers were in full bloom at Passion, VanDusen Garden's 2001 Flower and Garden Show that descended upon the Lower Mainland for four days of food, flora and fun at the start of June. More than 20 of Vancouver's top chefs, armed with garden fresh ingredients and abundance of enthusiasm participated in the best cooking class in town at The Vancouver Sun Gourmet Gallery, one of Passion's highlights.

For the cost of admission, the public was able to pick up some of the tricks of the trade from some of the industry's top talent. John Bishop, Susan Mendelson, Rob Feenie, Sami Lalji, Karen Barnaby and James Barber were on hand, as were the Pear Tree's Scott Jaegar, David Foot of The Beach Side Café, Frank Pabst of Pastis, Dino Renaerts of 900 West and Romay Prasad of CinCin Ristorante. Proving their journalistic chops come to them honestly, CBC's Don Genova along with morning host Rick Cluff, other BCTV personalities and the Vancouver Sun Food Editor Murray McMillan also got in on the act.

A never ending stream of talent poured across the Sun's Gourmet Gallery, as a new foodie took the stage every hour from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., testament to the generosity of the industry and the wealth of talent at our doorstep.

WHERE is the Answer, Not the Question

WHERE Vancouver magazine has evolved. After 31 years of serving the Vancouver visitor market with their popular publication, WHERE Vancouver has introduced an online counterpart at www.wher Vancouver.com.

In addition to the standard WHERE features such as What's On, What's In Store and Dining Around Town, including the Editor's A-List, the online version will have several new features of interest to travellers and concierges alike. Look for movie listings and reviews, local weather information, accommodation listings and a section designed specifically for the business traveller.

The site is the latest addition to the wherecanada.com network of travel web sites owned by Toronto-based Key Media Ltd.

What Have They Been Smoking in abc Country?

Relearning the alphabet is usually unnecessary, but when abc Country Restaurants Inc. introduced the tastes of authentic Smokehouse Barbeque last fall, regulars had to admit that their old time favourite restaurant had changed – for the better. It was just one of many changes for a company which has been a B.C. staple for over 25 years and has helped contribute to a volume and sales boost.

When abc Country Restaurant Inc. recently opened the doors to another location, this one in Nanaimo, it opened the doors to something different. A prototype of a new restaurant design, the new location went to the roots for inspiration, replicating the charm of a

country farmhouse, albeit one that seats 150 comfortably. Stone, brick, country décor and the taste of Smokehouse Barbeque are just a few of the changes which have helped abc evolve.

"We're sticking to our honest country roots," said abc Vice President John Harper, "But we're aggressively competing for market share with a concept that is always a work in progress."

It was four years ago that abc Family became abc Country and while the shift was subtle, the changes have continued to roll out across the almost 40 franchised locations that now extend from the Valley to Northern Alberta. Changing the physical environment of the restaurants to incorporate a countrified feel, the shift in focus could also be tasted in the menu which introduced new items such as Canadian AAA roast beef, hand-carved turkey and lattice-top Okanagan apple pies.

However, it has been the Smokehouse Barbeque that's been attracting a lot of attention from guests, including bbq fanatics from south of the border. Beef, pork and chicken are marinated, rubbed down and smoked for up to twelve hours to create everything from pulled pork sandwiches to smoky BBQ chicken.



TABLE ROCKS?



TABLE SHOX!

The End of the Wobble... Introducing Table Shox

The wheel has been invented. Sliced bread continues to fly off the shelves. The margin of opportunity for truly unique inventions that do not involve heaps of code and squadrons of programmers grows slimmer every day. All of which makes Table Shox even more, or maybe it would be better to say less, ground shaking.

Developed by Fundametal Designs, a local company presided over by Evian Macmillan, the Table Shox spells the end of the inevitable table wobble. From the dangerously sloped tables to those which induce mild nausea with their barely perceptible rocking and rolling, Table Shox have come to rescue the sanity of diners and the pocket books of restaurateurs.

The creation of Table Shox emerged from one man's damp trousers and bright idea. Ian MacDonald, the uncle of Macmillan's closest childhood friend, sat down with a drink at an airport and ended up the victim of another random attack of a wobbly table. Where countless millions have grimaced, moved tables or tried to remedy the problem with a sugar pack, MacDonald saw a tremendous window of opportunity. Table Shox were born.

No more MacGyver-like manipulations of coasters, napkins and matchbooks (inevitably betrayed by a lingering lilt and tremor). No more forcing servers to hit the deck in a vain attempt to manually adjust those "easy to use" tables of yore. Unleashed at the National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago on May 19th, the diminutive stabilizers generated gigantic buzz.

"The response was absolutely amazing in Chicago where we had our official launch," said Macmillan, who left his position of over 3 years with Squirrel Systems to pursue this opportunity. "We had a little 10' by 10' booth with a table rigged out with Table Shox standing on a pedestal. Four of us talked to restaurateurs of every kind non-stop for four days and we left with 889 follow ups, a good number of orders and interest from 37 countries."

With a retail price of \$4.25 per unit and the general need for four units per table, Table Shox are both simple, working with basic hydraulics, and inexpensive with the price being subject to volume. Already, Table Shox are being tested at select locations across the Lower Mainland, including The Pear Tree, Earl's and Joey Tomatoes.

Macmillan has also fielded calls from two of the largest smallwares and equipment distributors in the United States and the market is truly global. For more information, visit www.tablesbox.com.

Sulphite Woes Have Ice Cream Manufacturer Stepping Gingerly

Christie Eng cares about what goes into her line of Shady Creek ice creams. In fact, the Saanichton manufacturer and wholesaler takes great pride in keeping her ice creams free of all "artificial colours, flavours, stabilizers or emulsifiers" – it says so right on the label. With product now available in 20 restaurants in Greater Victoria and 50 grocery stores, Shady Creek is gearing up for large scale summer expansion. New containers, a line of sorbets and penetration of the Courtenay and Comox markets are all on the slate for the four-year-old purveyor of the world's happiest food. Life would be sweeter than ever – if it weren't for the ginger issue.

On March 22, 2001 the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) issued a warning concerning sulphite content in ginger products imported from Australia, where the bulk of the world's ginger is processed. Sold under various product names, brands and sizes, these ginger products, which include crystallized ginger, ginger in syrup and dusted ginger, do not have sulphite listed on the ingredients label. However, they do indeed contain sulphite and Eng's Australian Ginger ice cream was understandably menaced by this revelation.

"We had to stop production and relabel our Australian Ginger ice cream and are trying desperately to find a supplier of truly sulphite-free ginger," said Eng who would rather be concentrating on Shady Creek's upcoming business initiatives. "We will have to label with 'may contain traces of sulphite', but we would rather find a new product to fit our commitment to purity.

We were using Ginger in Syrup from Buderim Ginger Limited in Australia and switched to the line from Reed's. They make a point of stating on their label that their product is ginger, sugar and nothing else. They thought that sulphites used at the time of picking were washed off before processing. The CFIA found 10-20 parts per million of sulphite in both product lines. It's right across the board."

While consuming sulphites in such traces amounts is of no health concern to the majority of individuals, the consumption of an incompletely labelled product may cause a serious or life-threatening reactions in people with allergies to sulphites.

And while there have been no reported illnesses connected to this sulphite warning, Eng is not taking any chances. After all, the newly designed containers for Shady Creek Ice Cream have a subhead that reads quite clearly and honestly "Ice Creams and Sorbets Made Lovingly and Locally". While the fate of Shady Creek's Australian Ginger is hinged upon either a new supply of sulphite free ginger or a new label, Eng remains upbeat.

"We introduced Lavender and Banana flavours a couple of months ago and their doing really well and we're now supplying the Lieutenant Governor and the Empress, so life is still quite good," said Eng. "We just need to find some honest ginger and it would be perfect."





Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre's Executive Chef Andrew Court serves a well-rounded seafood selection.

Seafood Summit Strives for Sustainability

Established in June 1999 to represent the many British Columbian seafood industries and various industry associations, the B.C. Seafood Alliance met in Vancouver for the B.C. Seafood Summit 2001 on May 29th. On the agenda was nothing less than charting a course for the province's seafood industry with issues of environmental stewardship and sustainability featuring prominently in discussions, along with financial realities.

The event was the first of its kind to bring together leaders from B.C.'s commercial fishery and aquaculture sectors, as well as the province's seafood processors, marketers and exporters to plan for the future of the industry. The umbrella group's members collectively represent 90 per cent of all seafood produced in B.C. and used the Summit to put forward two reports of impact. One addressed the economic status of the seafood industry and the other looked into the industry's progress towards sustainability.

"The past decade has been a period of transition for B.C. seafood industries and the communities that rely on them," said Michelle James, Executive Director of the B.C. Seafood Alliance. "Today we have an industry that is no longer dominated by wild salmon and herring, but has seen tremendous advances in sustainable shellfish and groundfish harvests, and in the growth of aquaculture.

"We have a more diverse, a more competitive and a more sustainable seafood business in British Columbia today than ever before, and we want to move forward to enhance the value of our industry for the benefit of all British Columbians."

PricewaterhouseCoopers analyst Dave Egan told Summit delegates that the wholesale value of B.C.'s seafood industry has remained relatively constant over the past ten years at about \$1 billion, despite significant changes in industry complexion.

Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of wholesale seafood value represented by wild salmon and herring fell from 55% to 19% and 16% to 14% respectively. The share of total industry value increased for farmed salmon (from 8% to 31%), groundfish (from 14% to 19%) and shellfish (from 7% to 16%).

Archipelago Marine Research Ltd. consultant Brian Emmett told delegates that B.C.'s seafood sector has made significant strides toward sustainability over the past decade. In particular, he noted the shift from Total Quota (or derby) fisheries to Individual Quota fisheries, as well as improvements in stock assessment, selective fishing and habitat impacts.

"Many of these changes have been made in B.C. in advance of regulatory requirements, and have positioned the industry to take advantage of emerging marketplace demands for seafood produced in an environmentally sustainable way," Emmett said. "But there is still a lot of work to do. In particular, I think B.C. has the opportunity to become a world leader in sustainable fisheries by incorporating sustainability criteria, targets and indicators into its management plans."

Based on input received from Summit delegates, the BC Seafood Alliance is preparing a 'Vision for a Modern Seafood Industry in British Columbia', which will present key industry objectives, measurable targets and recommendations for public and private sector action. The 'Vision' will be submitted to the federal and provincial governments, and should be released to the public by the time you read this article.

Undoubtedly, this 'Vision' document will be of great interest to the industry, as well as to critics of aquaculture such as David Suzuki, who are carefully watchdogging the development of the B.C. seafood industry and gauging its environmental impact.

Those interested in learning more about the B.C. Seafood Alliance, or downloading copies of the submitted reports can visit www.bcseafoodalliance.com.

Whistler Northwind Puts B.C. On Rails

At its heart, and within minutes from any population centre, British Columbia is a beautiful, wild and notoriously inaccessible place to visit. When BC Rail unveiled a new luxury car to travel between North Vancouver, Whistler, 100 Mile House and Prince George, it did more than provide a new luxury adventure, it provided access to the full range of B.C.'s untamable beauty.

From the city lights of Vancouver to the peaks of Whistler and north to Cariboo country where the West is still wild, the Whistler Northwind provides guests with superb undisturbed views, thanks to its custom-designed 180 degree all-dome windowed passenger rail cars.

Providing the ultimate in comfort and views, the Northwind offers two tiers of travel, Panorama and Summit Service. Panorama Service provides passengers with a la carte, at-seat dining with white linens and fine china and the comfort of a completely restored, vintage, mid-train lounge car. For an extra sum, passengers can opt for Summit Service which provides them with a private, 1939, round-end, stainless lounge car. For Summit adventurers, gourmet meals are served in a fully restored vintage dining car decked out with white linen, china and gleaming tableware.

Travelling northbound to Prince George, the four-day three-night northbound package concludes with a flight from Prince George to Vancouver. Wild as the West may be, it never lacks for style.

