

YOU

METRO'S TOP TACOS

Readers dig into their favourites C4



ONE MORE MUSIC FEST

Westward hits several spots C8

VANCOUVER SUN SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2018

SECTION C

ISLAND OF DELIGHTS



A tapestry of fresh seafood awaits diners at Tofino Marina Resort on Vancouver Island. PHOTOS: LEILA KWOK FOR TOFINO MARINA RESORT.

Delicious spots abound as Vancouver Island is fast becoming a Canadian food destination

JOANNE SASVARI

Is there something in the water? The soil? The air? Or simply the kitchens?

Whatever the magical ingredient is, it seems that Vancouver Island — from Victoria to Tofino to the surrounding Gulf Islands — suddenly has become a national culinary powerhouse.

Take this year's enRoute Magazine nominations for Canada's best new restaurants. Two Island restaurants made the list of 30: Victoria's chicly French-accented The Courtney Room and the casual smoke-scented 1909 Kitchen in Tofino.

In comparison, foodie Vancouver had just one on the list — chef JC Poirier's nostalgic temple to butterfat, St. Lawrence. (The winners will be announced on Oct. 25, canadastbestnewrestaurants.com.)

Lest you think this is an aberration, just glance back at the past few years: To 2016, when Victoria's Agrilus came in at No. 4 overall; 2015, when tiny Pilgrimme on Galiano Island was No. 3; and 2014, when Tofino's Wolf in the Fog took first place in all of Canada. That's a lot of recognition for an area with only about two per cent of the nation's population.

So just what's cooking over there across the Strait of Georgia?

ESCAPE FROM THE CITY "It's a sign of the times," says Paul Moran, executive chef of 1909

Kitchen. "People are moving out of the big city and spreading themselves across the province."

As in so many other industries, Vancouver's astronomical real estate prices are driving talented young chefs out of town to smaller, more affordable communities. Chris Whittaker, formerly of the Listel Hotel's Forage and Timber, is just one. He recently packed his knives and headed off to Quaout Lodge in the Shuswap, where he can hunt, forage and raise his young family in a beautifully bucolic setting.

The island, though, has a special draw beyond budget-friendly accommodation. It also boasts a remarkable bounty of fresh, local produce that presents a delicious palette for a creative chef.

From the Saanich Peninsula and Cowichan Valley in the south to the Comox Valley in the north, almost everything grows on or around the island: dairy, poultry, lamb, orchard fruits, berries, vegetables, wine grapes, even exotica such as lemons, olives, kiwi fruit and tea leaves.

"We have some of the best produce in the world, and we have some of the best seafood," says Sam Harris, executive chef at The Courtney Room.

Moran adds, "All the different micro regions on the island and the different ingredients they produce, whether it's east coast or west coast, are definitely what appeals to me."

A RECENT EVOLUTION

The culinary scene wasn't always like this.

Vancouver Island's culture has long been influenced by its British colonial history. That meant you always could find a decent bowl of chowder or basket of fish 'n' chips. But good luck finding other ethnic dishes, let alone the nouvelle cuisine that was so fashionable elsewhere in the 1960s and '70s.

Back then, Victoria had Paggiacci's for kitschy pasta, the Empress for fancy roast beef dinners, Ming's for Chinese, and countless tea rooms serving a proper afternoon cuppa. Up island was a bit of a culinary wasteland.

Then three significant things happened.

In 1979, Sinclair and Frederique Philip opened Sooke Harbour House, a.k.a. "Chez Panisse north," where they served shellfish from the waters off the Whiffin Spit, chickens raised by the neighbours, wild mushrooms foraged from the forests, and a confetti of edible flowers plucked from their own gardens.

In 1984 John Mitchell and Paul Hadfield opened Spinnakers, Canada's first brew pub, in the Victoria suburb of Esquimalt. They designed it to be a welcoming "public place" where guests could enjoy good food, good beer and good company — a marked departure from the sadly punitive drinking dens typical of the 1970s and '80s. Then in 1996, the Wickaninnish



The fresh bounty from the Pacific is a staple, such as this seafood tower at the Magnolia Hotel's Courtney Room restaurant.

Inn flung open its doors on Tofino's Chesterman Beach, and head chef Rod Butters sent his hapless apprentices cycling down to the docks for fresh crab and prawns, confident he could serve Relais & Châteaux-worthy food in the wilderness.

These three establishments proved not only that chefs could create world-class cuisine from local ingredients on Vancouver Island, but that people would travel from all over the world to enjoy it.

SEE ISLAND ON C3



The Oot n' Oots — from left to right, Gabe Cipes, Ezra Cipes, Ruth Cipes, Ari Cipes and Matthew Cipes — a indie rock band from Kelowna, makes kids' music that won't drive parents around the bend.

## SPOTLIGHT

# KINDIE ROCK'S RIGHT ON WITH THE OOT N' OOTS

## STUART DERDEYN

Forget brostep, chiptune and 8-bit. Kindie rock is the music scene you need to know about. At least if you are age 10 and under. Blending adult singer-songwriter lyricism, heavy musical chops and content aimed at children, the genre is exploding across North America.

Think of it as kids' music that won't drive parents around the bend.

Okanagan-based quintet The Oot n' Oots are one of a handful of Canadian indie rock torchbearers.

Fronted by 11-year-old vocalist Ruth Cipes, the band is a full-on family affair. Ruth's dad Ezra (vocals, guitar) and a trio of uncles — Ari (vocals, guitar), Gabe (vocals, bass), and Matthew (vocals, drums) — comprise the crew. Its second album, titled Electric Jellyfish Boogaloo, arrived in May. Their 2016 debut, Songs and Tales from the Great Blue Whale, was nominated for Children's Artist of the Year at the 2017 Western Canadian Music Awards.

Like most artists in the indie rock genre, this isn't the Cipes' first swipe at musical life. Gabe and Ezra were fixtures on the Vancouver scene back in the day in their band, The Way Out opened for acts as varied as The English Beat and Bif Naked, and the siblings did instrumental sessions with many artists, including Tegan and Sara. When the family business beckoned, the musicians returned to Kelowna to work at Summerhill Pyramid Winery. But they didn't hang up their instruments permanently.

The Oot n' Oots came about because the itch to play again proved too hard not to scratch.

"It's important for us to have a creative project to do that isn't high-stakes, and enables us to get together, relax, have a good time and joke around," said Ezra Cipes. "A while after moving back, I really got depressed because I wasn't playing music in any form at all and, I think, it's a very direct vibrational action that influences the world. We've gone from a country-and-western bar band to assorted other groups before arriving with this project."

What brought the players to the Oot n' Oots was tied into that sense of spreading good vibrations around the world. As they had families, grew gardens and worked hard, the music changed.

"It got silly, fun and really good-vibe-y," he said. "It wasn't really intended as children's music, it just got into that. Especially after my daughter started singing and

doing open mics and stuff, she tied it all together."

Ruth barely appeared on the first album. From the doo-wop backing vocals on the opening wah-wah pedal-driven shuffle Dust Pan to the snarling lead vocal on the hard-rocking ode to culinary preferences, I Like It Saucy, and channeling her inner Loretta Lynn on Saturday's Sadder Day, she is all over Electric Jellyfish Boogaloo.

"In performance, she can get up in front of an audience and is really dynamic," he said. "But the studio is different and I had to really work hard to wrangle some of those performances out of her, which wasn't fun or keeping it light. Towards the end of the process, which began when she was 9, she really started to come into her own and it keeps on happening."

*Fundamentally, we are a rock 'n' roll band and don't really do the classic Raffi-style audience interaction singalongs, save for only a few instances.*

The Oot n' Oots have been regionally-based, touring and playing across Western Canada. But the burgeoning indie rock scene and the high quality of the Electric Jellyfish Boogaloo has the phone ringing more than before.

Bill Childs' Spare the Rock, Spoil the Child | Indie music for indie kids podcast has been a real champion of the Oot n' Oots songs since a mutual friend put in a request to Childs' show to play the band. This led to the group submitting its album to the annual Fids & Family awards for possible consideration. Fids & Family celebrates indie rock.

"We've been regional, touring and playing across Western Canada, but we've connected with people in the U.S. and Australia while the scene is really happening now, so who knows?" Ezra said. "Honestly, it's the coolest music scene I've ever been a part of — accessible, passionate and filled with wonderful, super-creative artists doing really great work."

Among the big names in the scene are familiar ones such as Dan Zanes, They Might Be Giants and '90s pop crooner Lisa Loeb. Dig deeper, and you get such inspiring artists as "kid-hop" rapper Secret Agent 23 Skidoo, whose Mozartistic may be the only rap rhymes about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart ever laid down, complete with full orchestra playing snippets of the composer's symphonies. This is not talking down to the audience at all.

"We don't really write or arrange with a super-young audience under consideration, actually," he said. "We just write things that entertain us and make us laugh which we want to be G-rated so everyone can get into it. There is quality control there, for sure." There is a payoff for the players. They get to perform to an appreciative audience on their own terms, rather than in some dank club with indifferent ownership and crowds.

"Fundamentally, we are a rock 'n' roll band and don't really do the classic Raffi-style audience interaction singalongs, save for only a few instances," Cipes said. "The thing for the audience to do is to get into it on their own terms, if they want to dance it's cool, if they want to shoe-gaze, that's cool, too. It's usually teens and adults who are the first ones to get hooked and get into it."

Since not everyone can be at the festival or family day where the indie rock is raging, the Oot n' Oots — like most of their contemporaries — make a fair number of many videos. These tend to deliver the music in the spirit of fun that Cipes continuously mentions. The family all appears to have acting chops and the clips look very professional. Cipes insists that, like making records, it has been a gradual process.

"The first video we made was Too Many Cookies with our friend Claire, who had just graduated high school and taken a video editing course," he said. "We scripted it, shot it all in one day and she went home and edited it that night and sent it to us the next morning, whereas Dust Pan we did ourselves with a friend who is a performing arts professor at UBC Okanagan. It would be nice to have a little bit of a budget to bring it up to the next level."

The Oot n' Oots seem well-positioned to get to the next level. The band has set new goals to find an avenue to establish a national reach and to follow that up with touring.

As long as it's fun, that is. [stuartderdeyn@postmedia.com](mailto:stuartderdeyn@postmedia.com) [twitter.com/stuartderdeyn](http://twitter.com/stuartderdeyn)

## Island chefs share passion for ingredient-driven dishes

## ISLAND FROM CI

## A COMMUNITY OF EATERS AND COOKS

Today the island boasts ingredient-driven restaurants in just about every community from Port Renfrew to Port Hardy, as well as dozens of food artisans, wineries, breweries and distilleries making delicious things from local produce.

But just as important as the ingredients that come from the sea and soil are the people who transform them into food and drink.

"I think we have a real movement of chefs and other hospitality professionals really embracing what we are," Harris says.

It helps that the island has such a strong, supportive food and drink community, which comprises, among others, the prestigious culinary arts program at Vancouver Island University, the Island Chefs Collaborative connecting chefs with farmers and food artisans, and North America's first Slow Food Community, Cowichan Bay.

"The kind of people that are drawn to the island are open-minded when it comes to food, and really care where ingredients come from. It's great," Moran says.

And Vancouver Island's food scene is still evolving, with the long overdue arrival of Asian and other world cuisines.

"It's an exciting time to be cooking," Harris says. "Now there's a bit more glamour and romance."

## A LOCAL SECRET NO MORE

For now, there's enRoute, and growing notional recognition.

"To be included in the top 30 is an honour and a nice pat on the

back for all the hard work we've done with the opening," says Moran, who previously cooked in kitchens all over Europe and at some of B.C.'s top heli-ski resorts. "It's a big morale booster."

Longtime visitors to Tofino might remember 1909 Kitchen as that slightly dodgy pub on the waterfront. Today, it is coolly modern, with stunning views of Clayoquot Sound from its floor-to-ceiling windows. At its heart is a wood-fired oven where Moran roasts everything from pizzas to crispy cauliflower to tender, miso-glazed black cod.

"It's ingredient-driven," Moran explains. "We try to work with high-quality products and not overmanipulate them."

As for Harris, this is not his first dance with the awards: he was opening chef de cuisine at Agritus when it earned its Top 10 nod in 2016. But when the Magnolia Hotel decided to bring its restaurant in house and transform it into an elegant fine-dining room, Harris jumped at the opportunity to return to his roots in white-tablecloth hotel restaurants.

"I always loved that start-to-finish experience of how far you can go with fine dining... to really transport someone through the level of service and the quality of the food," he says.

He's delighted by the nomination, and the affirmation it brings to his "classically modern" cuisine that travels from house-cured charcuterie through to perfectly miniature mignardises.

"It's a lot of validation," Harris says. "And it will mean a lot of cool people will walk through the door."

## ALBACORE TUNA &amp; WHITE RADISH TACOS

By Paul Moran, executive chef of 1909 Kitchen at the Tofino Marine Resort

- 10 oz (300 g) daikon radish
- 10 oz (300 g) albacore tuna
- 6 tbsp (20 g) chopped chives
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) white soy sauce
- 10 sheets (100 g) dried nori, torn
- 1½ cups (325 mL) mayonnaise, preferably homemade
- 4 cups (1 L) canola oil
- 3 sheets (40 g) phyllo pastry, shredded
- 1 lime, sliced
- 12 shiso leaves, torn



1. Thinly slice daikon radish into 2-by-2-inch (5 cm) "leaves" and store in cool water.

2. Slice albacore tuna into ½ oz (15 g) cubes (you should have about 20 similarly sized cubes). Toss with white soy and chives, cover and chill until ready to serve.

3. In a blender or food processor, blend together the nori and mayonnaise until it creates a smooth aioli. Store in a piping bag with a round tip and chill until ready to use. (Note that this will make more than you need; reserve the rest for garnishing other Japanese-flavoured dishes.)

4. In a deep-sided fry pan, heat the canola oil to 325 F (160 C) and quickly fry the shredded phyllo until it is lightly golden brown, about 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from oil and drain on absorbent paper.

## To assemble:

1. Remove daikon leaves from water and pat dry. Arrange on a platter. Place a dot of the nori aioli in the centre of each leaf. Add a piece of dressed tuna and a piece of torn shiso leaf. Finish with crispy phyllo and serve with a lime wedge.

Serves: 4

## SIDESTRIPE SHRIMP COCKTAIL

Recipe by Sam Harris, executive chef of the Courtney Room at Victoria's Magnolia Hotel

## Shrimp:

- 1 lb (454 g) sidestripe shrimp, shell on
- 8 cups (2 L) water (for cooking shrimp)
- 8 cups (2 L) ice water (to cool cooked shrimp)
- Juice from 1 lemon
- ½ cup (125 mL) salt

## Shrimp oil:

- ¾ cup (100 mL) extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) sweet paprika
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced

## Cocktail sauce:

- Diced tomato to taste
- Creamed horseradish to taste
- Ketchup to taste

## Assembly:

- 1 cup (250 mL) crème fraîche
- 16 chives, sliced into 1 inch (2 cm) batons
- 16 leaves sheep sorrel (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 300 F (150 C).
2. Peel shrimp and reserve shells for shrimp oil. Place peeled shrimp in a heatproof bowl. Put ice water in a separate bowl.
3. Bring water, salt and lemon

juice to a simmer at 175 F (80 C) and pour over shrimp. Poach for 2 minutes, then, using a skimmer, remove shrimp from cooking liquid and plunge into ice water. Cool for 5 minutes, then strain and pat dry with a kitchen towel. Chill until ready to serve.

## Make shrimp oil:

1. Place shrimp shells on a baking sheet and roast in the oven for 10 minutes.

2. Heat olive oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add shrimp shells, paprika and sliced garlic and lightly sauté for about 5 minutes, until shells are pink and garlic is fragrant but not browned.

3. Transfer mixture to a high-speed blender and purée for 2 minutes on highest speed. Strain through a coffee filter and leave to cool to room temperature.

## Make cocktail sauce:

1. Mix diced tomato, creamed horseradish and ketchup.

## To assemble:

1. Divide crème fraîche between 4 serving bowls. Top with cocktail sauce, shrimp, shrimp oil, chives and optional sheep sorrel. Serve with bread or crackers.

Serves: 4

METRO'S TOP TACOS

ONE MORE MUSIC FEST

## ISLAND OF DELIGHTS

Delicious spots abound in Vancouver Island's fast becoming a Canadian food destination

**SEASON OPENER**

**VSQ**

**hawksworth communications**

**TOFINO RESORT + MARINA**

VANCOUVER SUN, SEPTEMBER 8, 2018