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CAMPING

BRITISH COLUMBIA

M A G A Z I N E

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Taste of Summer FARMERS MARKETS

NOTHING SAYS SUMMER IN B.C. LIKE
A TRIP TO A FARMERS MARKET.
HERE ARE OUR TOP PICKS FROM
AROUND THE PROVINCE



BULKLEY VALLEY FARMERS MARKET

By David Webb

TUCKED BETWEEN THE BABINE AND Hudson Bay mountain ranges, in British Columbia's lush Bulkley Valley, Smithers' locally adored farmers market always draws a crowd.

"We're a hoppin' place," says Lyn Nugent, administrative assistant for the Bulkley Valley Farmers Market Association. Running from Mothers Day to the end of September, this lively outdoor concourse has been a staple in the community for nearly two decades.

"We have live music... Many people come and spend several hours there," adds Nugent. "It's a very social event—it gets busy between 10 o'clock and noon."

A vital part of Smithers' summertime scene, the market is an anticipated weekly outing for resident families and visitors alike. "We have a lot of regulars that come every week, but we have fairly high tourist traffic," adds Nugent. They may not travel to Smithers specifically for the veggies—it is a relatively remote burg, located on Highway 16 about halfway between Prince George and Prince Rupert—but "a good chunk" of happenstance travellers tend to stop by. Local or tourist, the biggest rush is on the fresh veggies. As a northern community, area farmers are noted for growing carrots, potatoes and other cold-weather-tolerant vegetables, though, according to Nugent, producers have



become a lot more creative lately.

"We've branched out. We have kohlrabi and we have wonderful garlic producers that sell beautiful bunches, properly preserved so they last right through the winter," she adds. And on market days, the abundance of kids wandering the market munching oversized cookies hints at wares beyond produce—two local bakers see guests queuing up like clockwork. Meg Roberts owns Rustica Wood Fired Bakery and creates artisan breads in an outdoor wood fired oven; edible works of art almost too pretty to slice. And Ursula Yeker, of Foxhole Bakery—one of the market's founding members—sells out quickly of her gingerbread and organic granola.

Nugent, whose herb-growing mother was also a founding member of the market, has noted a steep rise in attendance over the past five years. "We've had as many as 70 vendors; we average 45 to 50 vendors," she says. "We see 500 to 1,000 [attendees] per day, easily."

The market, celebrating its 20th anniversary next year, has been embraced by local businesses, who see the non-permanent vendors as a thriving element of the community, bringing increased foot-traffic to downtown. The music starts around 10:00 a.m., drawn from a diverse local talent pool, and plays until the market's end. The mayor may even be on-hand to kick things off.

"Sometimes, I really need to nip in and get my food for the week and zip out again," says Nugent. "For a lot of other people, it's for doing their shopping—but also for having a leisurely cup of coffee and a Danish and listening to the music. I like that we can achieve both of those things at this market."

Where: Central Park (Highway 16 and Main Street), Smithers.

When: Saturdays from Mother's Day Weekend to September 26; 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

For More Info: bvfm.ca

Need to Know: The Bulkley Valley Farmers Market operates during the off-season in the Smithers Curling Rink. Attendance is increasing—it was open every weekend this past October, November and December and every second weekend January, February, March and April.



COTTONWOOD COMMUNITY MARKET & NELSON DOWNTOWN LOCAL MARKET

By David Webb

WHEN THE DOUKHOBORS FIRST TILLED soil in British Columbia's Slocan Valley some 120 years ago, they probably never imagined the fertile land that provided them with hardy root vegetables would also bring drum circles and artisan breadmakers. But that's exactly what's happened in this close-knit town on the shores of Kootenay Lake.

Jesse Woodward, markets and events director for the West Kootenay Eco-Society, explains how Nelson's two summertime farmers markets have boosted community spirit within the town.

"The Cottonwood Market has been running for 20 years in Cottonwood Falls Park. It's an institution in Nelson... people spend all day," says Woodward. "The one in downtown is very much a buyer's and seller's market... The big draw is the fresh, local produce. It's amazing to come down to Baker Street and buy food that's been grown in the Slocan Valley, just around the corner."

Popular though it is, the newer Downtown Local Market—now in its seventh year—has seen challenges. The initial obstacle, Woodward says, was communicating to local merchants how the event would benefit the community as a whole. "[Business owners'] main fear was that having a market right downtown would draw away revenue," Woodward says. "It's true, it does, when it happens, but it also brings hundreds of people onto Baker Street."

With about 50 vendors on one block of downtown Nelson ("tightly packed but nicely done"), the Downtown Market sees Nelson's main thoroughfare closed to vehicle traffic every Wednesday during the season. This is an important aspect in itself, says Woodward.

"You get this European feel of people pouring out of the businesses and local area and strolling along Baker Street where normally there would be cars," he says. "People buy food and sit around—it's quite lively. It's a very community-minded event."

Seven years in, the market is a happy place.

"It really has been accepted, the city is behind us and the business community realizes the downtown market is great to have and really adds a whole wonderful flavour all through the



summer. It's good for Nelson, and that's good for them," explains Woodward.

The downtown market is focused on local production—every seller is from the local area, with a "make it, bake it, grow it" ethos. The longer-running Cottonwood Community Market, held Saturdays, has a different vibe.

"For true Nelson flavour, you have to come see the Saturday market," says Woodward. "It's an incredible setting in a park with a waterfall and people in a drum circle."

Set in Cottonwood Falls Park—home of the cascade that first generated electricity for Nelson in the 1800s—the Cottonwood Community Market has permanent structures housing 40 vendors and is more heavily weighted on the arts and crafts and ready-to-eat foods. Both local and transient merchants sell their wares throughout the summer.

"There is beautiful live music. Everyone in Nelson comes down there on Saturdays," says Woodward. People particularly line up for Kathy Bivar's homemade root beer—of which she sells hundreds of bottles—and Jessica Piccinin's Root & Vine Farms; a "super-focused young farmer" who sells sumptuous produce at both markets. Plus, there's the French Bakery—the list goes on.

"Nelson is a special town," says Woodward. "Add a summer day and a couple farmers markets and it just doesn't get any better."



Where: Cottonwood Falls Park (Cottonwood Community Market); 400 Block of Baker Street (Downtown Local Market), Nelson.

When: Saturdays, May 16 to October 31, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Cottonwood Community Market); Wednesdays, June 10 to September 23, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Downtown Local Market).

For More Info: ecosociety.ca/markets-festivals

Need to Know: Baker Street erupts into the effervescent MarketFest for three nights this summer (June 26, July 24 and August 21). Downtown will see more than 100 vendors, plus live music and dance performances, from 6:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Admission is by \$5 donation.

WHAT'S in SEASON?

January
APPLES, CABBAGE, BEARS, ROSEMARY, SAGE, TURNIPS, WINTER SQUASH.

February
APPLES, CABBAGE, BEARS, ROSEMARY, SAGE, TURNIPS.

March
APPLES, BEARS, ROSEMARY, SAGE.

April
APPLES, ASPARAGUS, CHIVES, BEARS, RHUBARB, ROSEMARY, SAGE, SEINACH.



KAMLOOPS REGIONAL FARMERS MARKET

By David Webb

"MY MOM SAYS THAT I FIRST VISITED THE market when I was two days old," laughs Annelise Grube-Cavers, Saturday Market manager at the Kamloops Regional Farmers Market. Her father was one of the founding members; Grube-Cavers stopped by, a babe-in-arms, on her way home from the hospital. Now managing the market for the past year, her personal history at this summertime event illuminates the longstanding community and family traditions that underline the Kamloops Regional Farmers Market.

With abundant agriculture in the local area, Kamloops hosts two markets throughout a long season. Hosted on the sidewalk next to the main drag through town, the Wednesday market is a popular place for locals to pick up their groceries for the week, as well as for lunch-hour traffic. On Saturday, though, things really come alive.



"It's an amazingly energetic community space... There's a lot of activity—really great buskers and we sometimes hire live bands," explains Grube-Cavers of the weekend market. "There's this ambience factor and a social aspect... building relationships with not only vendors but other community members and community groups... it's a really important hub."

The Saturday market sees St. Paul Street closed to car traffic, with about 70 vendors on site—though at times spiking to 90 or more. (Wednesday is a calmer affair, with a maximum of about 35 vendors.) Live music ranges from a member of the Kamloops Symphony Orchestra who switches from classical to bluegrass for market days, playing strings alongside his two sons, to locally beloved Willard Wallace, master of the folk, country and classic rock cover tune. There are also wonderful artisans and prepared food stalls—but the priority is on local agriculture.

"You can get an incredible diversity of foods," says Grube-Cavers. Long-time vendors Mendel, Paula and Saul Rubinson, of Silver Spring Organic Farm, are famous for their "huge" heads of lettuce. But arguably the most popular vendor is Irene's Bannock, operated by Janice Billy and named for the booth's founder, her late mother-in-law.

"They've been attending for at least 20 years—they have a lineup until they sell out each day. It becomes a tradition," adds Grube-Cavers (Irene's Bannock only attends a select number of markets). And the community fully embraces the event. Each year, Grube-Cavers is peppered with media requests for opening-day dates and info on new additions. The markets have become tourist draws too—organizers operate a booth with info on area attractions, as well as maps to local food producers and other markets. In fact, a study on B.C.'s farmers markets by the University of Northern B.C. revealed that 17 percent of Kamloops market patrons were from out-of-town.

"It's something that we'd like to grow—the area has wonderful agriculture and [the market] helps increase peoples' knowledge of the local food system," says Grube-Cavers. For the Kamloops Farmers Market, the future is as bright as the North Thompson sunshine—there were more new applications this year than last and it has become the premier place for many local producers to sell their food.

"It's really nice to see new agriculture springing up in the area, which is partly because of the support the market supplies and the outlet it provides," says Grube-Cavers. "It's very exciting to see that growth."

ANNELISE GRUBE-CAVERS 3X



KELOWNA FARMERS & CRAFTERS MARKET

By John See

"OUR MOTTO IS MAKE IT, BAKE IT OR grow it," says Gisele Glover, market manager of the Kelowna Farmers & Crafters Market, one of B.C.'s biggest al fresco shopping attractions. But that doesn't mean just anyone can roll-up and be a vendor. "All our producers have to come from within our Armstrong to Summerland boundaries," she adds.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the ever-popular market—which runs twice weekly during its April to mid-November summer season and also includes a chill-busting indoor winter version—can lure up to 170 vendors and almost 10,000 shoppers on its sunniest peak season days.

But that's not surprising in a produce-loving Okanagan region long established as one of B.C.'s most vibrant agricultural areas.

"Just over half our vendors are farmers," says Glover, adding that savvy customers know exactly when to bring extra shopping bags for the market's fresh-cropped asparagus, cherries and apples. And while the arrival of lush peaches can easily trigger an epidemic of Kelowna-area pie-baking, sweet grapes, cantaloupes and watermelons also help keep local fruit bowls full.

Alongside the pristine produce, the market's tented stalls indicate a strong commitment to arts and crafts. "Sims sells lovely jewelry and Nooks' handmade children's clothing is also very popular," says Glover, adding that pottery, woodwork and handmade soaps provide a mul-

KERRI-JO

titude of additional reasons to shop beyond the fruit and veg, artisan cheeses and home-baked goodies.

But the market's main motivation will always be to trumpet the region's uniquely rich bounty—which explains many of the 13 pop-up festivals studding its season-long calendar. August's Corn Festival and October's Apple Daze draw the crowds. But July's Cherry Festival has the best sideshow: the annual, laugh-a-minute Pit Spitting Contest.

"A line is drawn in the pavement and whoever spits their pit the furthest wins a Market Bucks gift certificate. The most fun is watching the young kids: they try so hard but it usually just dribbles out!" says Glover.

It's a competition that clearly requires plenty of energy, which means an essential fuel-up at one of the market's lip-smacking concessions. From Family Gourmet Foods' bulging breakfast quesadillas to the naughty chocolate or cream-filled confections at Crepe Bistro's mobile trailer, there's usually an alluring aroma calling your name here. "I always seem to find time for french fries when I'm walking around the market—even though I try not to!" explains Glover.

Apart from the fries, does she have any final tips for visiting shoppers? "If you really want to get the best selection of produce, I suggest arriving by 8:00 a.m.—some of the most popular vendors are sold out by 11:00 a.m. Come early and fill up your market bags."



Where: 200 block of St. Paul Street (Saturday Market); 400 block of Victoria Street (Wednesday Market), Kamloops.

When: Saturdays, April 25 to October 31, 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; Wednesdays, May 6 to October 28, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

For More Info: kamloopsfarmersmarket.com; @KamloopsFarmMkt (Twitter)

Need to Know: Looking for more market fun? Head 50 km north along Highway 16, turning left on Tod Mountain Road, to reach the resort town of Sun Peaks and its small though lively farmers market (Sundays, June 28 to September 6; sunpeaksresort.com/farmers-market).



Where: Located at the corner of Dilworth Drive and Springfield Road, Kelowna.

When: Wednesday and Saturday, April 1 to November 14; 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

For More Info: kelowna-farmersandcraftersmarket.com

Need to Know: Saturday winter markets will also be staged indoors at Parkinson Recreation Centre, 1800 Parkinson Way, from November 21 to March 26, between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

WHAT'S in SEASON?

May
APPLES, ASPARAGUS, CHIVES, FIDDLEHEADS, RADISH, RHUBARB, ROSEMARY, SAGE, SPINACH, TURNIPS.

June
APPLES, CAULIFLOWER, CHERRIES, CHINESE VEGETABLES, CHIVES, CILANTRO, LETTUCE, PEAS, POTATOES, RADISH, RHUBARB, ROSEMARY, SAGE, SALAD GREENS, SPINACH, STRAWBERRIES, THYME, TURNIPS.

July
AERIGOTS, BASIL, BEANS, BEETS, BLUEBERRIES, BROCCOLI, CABBAGE, CARROTS, CAULIFLOWER, CELERY, CHERRIES, CHINESE VEGETABLES, CHIVES, CILANTRO, CUCUMBERS, KALE, LETTUCE, PEAS, PEPPERS, POTATOES, RADISH, RASPBERRIES, RHUBARB, ROSEMARY, SAGE, SALAD GREENS, SPINACH, STRAWBERRIES, SUMMER SQUASH, SWISS CHARD, TOMATOES, THYME, TURNIPS.

Vancouver has seven great farmers markets running throughout the summer, each with its own unique vibe and all under the Vancouver Farmers Markets banner. Check out their website at eatlocal.org for more information on times, locations, shopping tips and more.

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WHAT'S in SEASON?

August

APPLES, AUBERGINES, BASIL, BEANS, BEETS, BLACKBERRIES, BLUEBERRIES, BROCCOLI, CABBAGE, CARROTS, CAULIFLOWER, CELERY, CHINESE VEGETABLES, CHIVES, CILANTRO, CORN, CUCUMBERS, CURRANTS, GARLIC, KALE, LETTUCE, MELONS, ONIONS (SWEET), PEACHES, PEARS, PEPPERS, PLUMS, POTATOES, RADISH, RASPBERRIES, ROSEMARY, SAGE, SALAD GREENS, SHALLOTS, SPINACH, STRAWBERRIES, SUMMER SQUASH, SWISS CHARD, TOMATOES, THYME, TURNIPS.

LOCAL RHUBARB



VANCOUVER FARMERS MARKETS

By John Lee

WHEN OPENING THEIR FIRST FARMERS market in B.C.'s biggest city in July 1995, nervous organizers didn't know if they'd sell more than a bean or two. But day one lured a handful of vendors and 500 curious shoppers—a seed that's since sprouted into seven weekly summer gatherings throughout the city, all under the Vancouver Farmers Markets (VFM) banner.

"Saturday's Trout Lake Market is our biggest, with around 55 vendors and 6,000 visitors on its busiest days. But Kitsilano isn't far behind," says VFM operations manager Roberta LaQuaglia.

It's not all about large markets with big crowds, though. "Smaller markets like Kerrisdale and Mount Pleasant are our hidden gems. They're great for exploring neighbourhoods and meeting the locals," she says, adding that VFM's summer markets run from May or June into October.

Like a punnet of multi-hued heirloom tomatoes, each market has a distinct flavour. Yaletown's Thursday version attracts downtown workers; the West End's Saturday chapter sells the most baked and prepared goods; and Sunday in Kits is a walk-through cornucopia of organic produce.

Organics are part of an ever-changing menu of luscious B.C. fruits and vegetables dominating each market. "Early season is all about fresh-picked greens. And there's always a scramble when the strawberries, blueberries, cherries and

peaches arrive," says LaQuaglia, adding that some farmers love pushing the boundaries of what we think the province produces.

That means vendors selling anything from B.C.-grown kiwi, edamame and turmeric to locally-cultivated fava beans or wild-foraged nettles and morels. And this summer—following provincial liquor law changes—there's a fully-stocked bar of regional booze available.

"Granville Island's Artisan Sake Maker will be at several markets. We'll also have B.C. wine, Vancouver-made spirits and beer from Bomber Brewing and R&B Brewing. Our maximum is three alcohol vendors per market and the idea is to show how you can pair these with our food."

Cheese will no doubt be a pairing favourite, with popular producers Little Qualicum Cheeseworks, Salt Spring Island Cheese Company and Farm House Natural Cheeses from Agassiz bringing their curdtastic treasures to market. And for picnic planners, there will be plenty of bakery accompaniments to consider.

Purebread—with shops in Whistler and Vancouver—has been a runaway success at the city's farmers markets in recent years, with giddy queues forming as soon as its aromatic walnut raisin and lavender rosemary loaves are unpacked. But while Purebread's secret is out, LaQuaglia points to what may be the markets' next big bakery star. "Beyond Bread has a great assortment of rustic artisan breads—they're definitely one to look out for this year."

They're not the only vendor worth pinpointing on VFM's website market maps. This summer sees first-timers selling everything from hand-pressed almond milk to vegan seed and nut cheeses. And if you're still hungry, Vancouver food trucks like

Le Tigre, Kaboom Box and Creperie La Boheme—plus a busy busker line-up—add to the markets' festival feel.

With 450,000 annual shoppers, yearly vendor sales of \$8.17 million and two additional winter markets that help producers sustain themselves year-round, VFM—celebrating its 20th anniversary this summer—has thrived since its tentative early days. But there's always room for more green shoots.

"We still take neighbourhood requests for new markets and we're always interested in setting up where there's a good location and a groundswell of support," says LaQuaglia. "But our mission hasn't changed over the years: we're still committed to being a force for healthy local farms and people."



COMOX VALLEY FARMERS MARKET

By Desiree Miller

WITH HUNDREDS OF FARMS SURROUND-ing the small town of Comox, the Comox Valley Farmers Market has it good. Situated on the east coast of Vancouver Island, an area known as an agricultural hot spot, this market features an abundance of gorgeous crops cultivated from farms and producers in the Comox and Strathcona districts.

Since its inception in 1992, the market remains unique with no crafts sold—only food and agricultural products that are grown or made by the person selling it. "The Comox Valley Farmers Market was started by farmers and is driven by farmers," says executive director Vickey Brown. "All in an effort to stay true to our original intent which is to deliver local food to local hands."

And that they do. During peak season their Saturday market, which is located on the Exhibition Grounds in Courtenay, reaches capacity at 70 vendors and has a waiting list of eager businesses who would love to get in. Local musicians come down and play for the crowds, adding entertainment to the feel-good atmosphere. They also run a mid-week summer market in downtown Courtenay giving residents more opportunity to buy local.

On average, the market will host around 1,500 visitors from all over the valley. As the largest of its kind in the area, the Comox Valley Farmers Market has become a sought after grocery destination. "On a sunny Saturday during peak, it's not uncommon to have a crowd of 3,000," says Brown. "It's a reflection of the local food move-

ment—people are becoming more aware and want to support Vancouver Island farmers."

With a huge selection to browse, taste and indulge, the event makes for a pleasurable shopping experience. "We have a wide range of produce, products and every kind of meat you can imagine," says Brown, naming rabbit and water buffalo as two of the more obscure varieties. "We also feature unique processed foods like homemade corn tortillas, hemp frozen desserts and spirits made from honey."

But that doesn't even scratch the surface. More than 40 different farmers offer fresh fare, bakers serve up homemade cookies, granolas and breads, artisan cheese and wine makers sell their goods and butchers sell quality meats, fish and sausages. This is what keeps loyal customers returning for their weekly grocery shop. As well, the market boasts producers that focus on special diet goods such as paleo, gluten-free and dairy-free products.

Thanks to passionate board members, dedicated vendors and supportive communities who make the market a continuous success, this year, the B.C. Association of Farmers Markets awarded the Comox Valley Farmers Market the Large Market of the Year award. While this title is a true honour, the ongoing goal is to spread outward and reach more people. "Because we can't make this one market bigger, we'll have to open more markets in more communities to spread the love of fresh whole food through the valley," says Brown.



Where: Seven summer locations: Kerrisdale, Kitsilano, Main Street Station, Mount Pleasant, Trout Lake, West End, Yaletown.

When: Most markets are Saturday or Sunday, with Main Street Station on Wednesday and Yaletown on Thursday. VFM's website has times and locations.

For More Info: eatlocal.org

Need to Know: Weekly winter markets are also held at Riley Park (Saturdays) and Hastings Park (Sundays).



Where: Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds at 4839 Headquarters Road, Courtenay, April to October; Native Son's Hall in Downtown Courtenay, October to April. Wednesdays on England Avenue in downtown Courtenay, from July 8 to September 2.

When: Saturday market, year round 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.; Wednesday market, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

For More Info: www.cvfm.ca

Need to Know: The market runs rain or shine, free parking at all locations, market money is available for purchase via debit or credit on site in case you don't have cash.



WHAT'S in SEASON?

October

APPLES, BEANS, BEETS, BLACKBERRIES, BROCCOLI, BRUSSELS SPROUTS, CABBAGE, CARROTS, CAULIFLOWER, CELERY, CHIVES, GILANTRO, GORN, GRANBERRIES, GARLIC, KALE, LETTUCE, LEEKS, ONIONS (SWEET), ONIONS (BOOING), PEAS, PEPPERS, POTATOES, PUMPKINS, RADISHES, ROSEMARY, SAGE, SALAD GREENS, SWISS CHARD, TOMATOES, THYME, TURNIPS, WINTER SQUASH.



By Desiree Miller

CEDAR FARMERS MARKET



Where: On the grassy field in front of the Crow & Gate Pub at 2313 Yellow Point Road, Cedar.

When: From Mother's day to the last Sunday in October; 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

For More Info: cedarfarmersmarket.org

Need to Know: Room for over 250 cars. Make sure to stop for a pint at the world-renowned Crow & Gate Pub nearby, it's one of the best pubs you'll find anywhere.



IF HAVING A FARMERS MARKET

located on a grassy field in front of an iconic English pub isn't enough of an enticer, let's take it one step further. Located in central Vancouver Island, just south of Nanaimo, and featuring over 80 full-time vendors, international food carts and freshly roasted coffee, this market makes for a tasty day out.

"It's more than just meat and veggies," says James Street, marketing, advertising and communications director at Cedar Farmers Market. "We have a diverse group of goods to experience, which makes for an entertaining day out."

For 17 years now, the Cedar Farmers Market has focused on being a make it, bake it and grow it market. Keeping with the B.C. Association of Farmers Market guidelines of 30 percent non-food products including craftspeople, woodworkers, pottery and potted plants and the remaining 70 percent being locally grown or produced food.

Street, a sausage vendor himself, sells at a number of different markets in the region but favours Cedar's market for the family feel and young family entrepreneurs it features. "My kids and wife come with me to sell sausages—we are all a part of it," says Street. "The vendors help one another with setting up and spreading the word." He believes the overwhelming support could stem from the fact that many of the original vendors remain at the core of the market, rather than seeing a lot of turnover.

And the shoppers are serious about their food.

With 3,000 to 4,000 people coming through on a Sunday from as far south as Victoria and as far north as the Comox Valley, Cedar Farmers Market is a supermarket in its own right. "We will see people come in with five or more reusable shopping bags and load up on sacks of carrots, potatoes, chicken and eggs," says Street. "They are actually doing their grocery shopping for the week."

Many of the clientele come back week after week, making Cedar a destination. These return customers are highly coveted by vendors and offer a real value to their business. "Once our vendors get in they want to stay in," says Street. "This means an abundant selection which is good for everyone."

Street says that they believe in the idea of food tourism as a great way to encourage people to come, hang out and try high quality food. From there, the flavour will bring them back. "I have seen people buy caseloads of fresh strawberries at \$6 a basket," says Street. "It's not because they are cheaper than the grocery store, because they aren't. It's because they are the most amazing tasting strawberries they've ever had." And this is the reason people are changing how and where they shop for food.

For More Info

B.C. Association of Farmers Markets
bcfarmersmarket.org

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By
JANE ZATYLYN

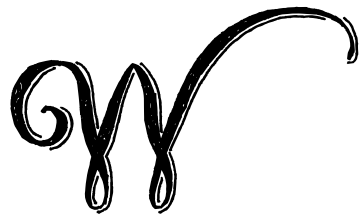
FOOD TRUCKS AND AN ISLAND LIFESTYLE GO HAND IN HAND, HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST MOBILE EATERIES IN THE GULF ISLANDS (AND ONE IN TOFINO)



Plus

SEVEN GREAT FOOD TRUCKS FROM THE REST OF B.C.

By
JOHN LEE



WHEN I WAS A KID, A FOOD TRUCK was where you went to get a cone of hot, salty french fries, a steamed hot dog or a soft vanilla ice cream cone. A food truck was also a mobile canteen that arrived at construction sites during lunch hour, blowing its horn before opening up to serve pre-made sandwiches and mediocre coffee. One thing was for sure: a food truck was not where you went for a fine meal.

Over the past five years, all that has changed. Gourmet food trucks have rolled into virtually every community, town and city in British Columbia. When the Food Network television show *The Great Food Truck Race* debuted in 2010 and the Canadian reality show *Eat St.* premiered in 2011, street vendors became cool entrepreneurs on the frontlines of the local food movement.

Vancouver started licensing street food vending in 2010, with a goal of focusing on nutritious foods that represent the cultural diversity of Vancouver. Today, more than 100 licensed specialty food trucks line city streets. And, while decadent treats are still on some menus, many mobile eateries are choosing to serve up healthier street eats, made from locally sourced, sustainable ingredients.

When I visit Vancouver, the thought of the food trucks sitting out there on the street makes my mouth water by 11:00 a.m. At noon, I head outside to choose my lunch from curries, tacos, steamed pork buns, *dim sum*, El Salvadoran *papas*, waffles and more. Though frequented by tourists and office workers alike, each truck has a following, and each has its own distinct personality. "It's like a smorgasbord on wheels," one woman said to me recently as I waited in line with her for a gourmet vegan sandwich at Loving Hut. I couldn't agree more.

While Vancouver is consistently

recognized as one of North America's top food truck cities, the trend certainly didn't start here. Food experts credit the Kogi Korean BBQ food truck in Los Angeles with kicking off the craze in the U.S. back in 2008, though Mexican taco trucks had been on that city's streets for decades. Another trend set by Kogi was its use of Twitter. Lacking a fixed location, its owners announced the truck's whereabouts via Twitter, influencing the heavy reliance on social media marketing by food trucks owners that continues today.

North of the border in B.C., a Tofino startup may have bragging rights as the first B.C. gourmet food truck. SoBo, the surf town's celebrated seafood restaurant, got its start in a purple catering truck in 2003. Despite its tiny kitchen and humble parking lot location, SoBo (short for "sophisticated bohemian") was named one of the top 10 best new Canadian restaurants in Canada by *En Route* magazine in its first year of operation. A few years later, owners Lisa and Artie Ahier secured a building in the heart of Tofino, where SoBo remains today. Kaeli Robinsong and Jason Sussman opened their first Tacofino food truck in the same location six years ago, just as mobile eateries were beginning to take off in Vancouver.

"We were working seasonally at the time in tree planting camps in northern B.C. and Alberta," remembers Robinsong. "Jason as a tree planter and I was a camp cook." The pair travelled to Mexico in the winter to surf, and wanted to put down roots somewhere where they could live, work and surf full-time. "Tofino had everything we wanted."

When the global economic downturn hit in 2008, many experienced chefs found themselves out of work, another factor that led to the popularity of food trucks across North America. Starting a food truck is a lower risk investment than opening a restaurant, but still allows the chef/owner to be entrepreneurial. "We were able to buy our truck and open with our tree planting money," says Robinsong.

As was the case with SoBo, the Tofino food truck was an incubator for Tacofino's business model, which has grown to include food trucks in Vancouver and brick-and-mortar restaurants in both Vancouver and Victoria.

In smaller communities like Tofino and throughout the Gulf Islands, mobile eateries are a sustainable way for chefs to bring new fine dining choices to appreciative smaller populations.



Above: Tacofino's food trucks have been so successful they've expanded to Victoria and Vancouver. Below: Try their famous fish tacos.

Shelley Okepnak, owner of the Flying Black Dog Café on Galiano Island, gave up a career as a line cook in Vancouver to open her popular mobile eatery on Galiano Island in 2008.

"Running a food truck gives me the opportunity to become a self-employed business owner and purveyor of food without needing a huge investment," she says. "I get to meet and nurture new customers, who have become great friends."

Local business is also very important for Wild Thyme Coffee House, a converted double-decker bus/café on Saturna Island. "It's the key to our survival," explains owner Aleah Johnson. "Understanding each customer, remembering their names, orders and habits is critical."

With more room for tables and chairs, a food truck in a small community

may feel more like a restaurant than its curbside counterpart in a city. For this reason, even if the food truck-craze wanes in urban areas—as it has in the U.S.—chances are that mobile eateries in smaller communities will endure. Regardless of where a food truck is parked, though, the close interaction between chef and customer is similar, says Kaeli Robinsong. And that may be one of the very best things about eating a meal from a food truck—besides the fact that the fare is so much more inventive today than it was when I as a kid.

"It feels like you are giving your customers more than just a meal—it's a food experience," explains Robinsong. Dan Davies, owner of The Stand on Pender Island, agrees: "The best part for us is the interactivity with people from here and abroad... and being part of their fond summer memories."



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GULF ISLANDS'
Best
FOOD TRUCKS
◆◆◆◆

TACOFINO
Tofino, Victoria,
Vancouver

What: An orange and chrome food truck selling Baja-inspired tacos and more. Notable design detail: the painting of the Virgin de Guadalupe, holding a taco.

Where: 1184 Pacific Rim Highway, Tofino (in the "Live to Surf" complex)

Contact: 250-726-8288, tacofino.com

Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., 7 Days Per Week

Seating: Takeout.

On the Menu: Mexican beach food: Fish tacos, burritos, tortilla soup, tuna "ta-tacos" and local seasonal specials such as roasted squash tacos, Baja-style trap-caught spot prawn tacos and wild mushroom quesadillas.

Best Bet: Hands-down, the fish tacos. Best north of Baja. Tempura-style lingcod, topped with salsa fresca, chipotle mayo and shredded cabbage in a soft taco shell.

Good to Know: No time to get to Tofino? No worries. Surf's up for Tacofino in Vancouver and Victoria, in food trucks as well as permanent locations.

THE STAND
Pender Island

What: Old-school diner-style food in a Winnebago trailer-turned-food truck.

Where: 1371 Otter Bay Road, Pender Island (at the ferry terminal).

Contact: 250-629-3292, facebook.com/thestandonpender

Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:15 p.m. Sunday. (Get there early, or call ahead, as all food is made to order.)

Seating: Outside tables seat about 20, or go back to your vehicle in



the ferry lineup.

On the Menu: Chicken, beef, salmon, oyster and halibut burgers, breakfast sandwiches, hot dogs, vegetarian choices, french fries and onion rings, ice cream and shakes, coffee.

Best Bet: The Hummer double hamburger with homemade beef patties and all the fixings. You'll need both hands to hold it, lots of napkins and maybe even a fork and knife.

Good to know: A beloved Pender fixture for 22 years. Father/son owners Dan and Josh Davies took over the food truck last year from the previous owners.

Ethos Mediterranean Food has 30 years of history on Saltspring Island.



FLYING BLACK DOG MOBILE EATERY

Galiano Island

What: Gourmet food truck specializing in fresh, innovative cuisine.

Where: 97 Georgeson Bay Road, Galiano Island (across the road from the DayStar Market).

Contact: facebook.com/flying-blackdog

Hours: Lunch only, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Wednesday to Saturday.

Seating: Rustic covered dining at outside tables and chairs for about 16.

On the Menu: Artful, house-made burritos, bowls, rotis, sandwiches, veggie burgers, bison burgers, soups, falafel and sweet treats.

Best Bet: You don't have to be a vegetarian to fall for the Roasted Vegetable Nut Burger. Served with avocado, cheddar cheese, roast shallot mayo, red onion and pickle.

Good to Know: Get there early: the Flying Black Dog is a well-kept

local secret, and tables fill up quickly with regulars.

WILD THYME COFFEE HOUSE

Saturna Island

What: A converted 1963 double-decker Leyland bus, offering gourmet coffee and fresh, locally sourced foods.

Where: 109 East Point Road, Saturna Island (two minutes from the ferry terminal).

Contact: 250-539-5589, wildthymecoffeehouse.com

Hours: 5:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday.

Seating: About 16 inside the bus on its upper level, another 20 outside.

On the Menu: Local farm-fresh sandwiches and wraps, quiche, full espresso bar, pies and other desserts. The menu changes often, based on fresh local produce.

Best Bet: The daily special. Sure bet: A slice of freshly baked pie and a latte. Coffee is fair trade and roasted in Victoria by Yoka's Coffee, Tea & Honey.

Good to Know: Wild Thyme has been a community-supported business since it opened in 2012, with locals pitching in to paint the bus, replace the windows and of course, frequent the café. Owner Aleah Johnson recently started a crowd-funding campaign to buy the land the bus sits on, and hopes to one day build a B&B alongside the bus.

AL'S GOURMET FALAFEL 'N FRIES

Saltspring Island

What: Little red wooden food truck specializing in falafel, kebabs and poutine.

Where: 151 Rainbow Road, Saltspring Island.

Contact: 250-538-7573, alsourmetfalafel.com

Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday.

Seating: Takeout.

On the Menu: Falafel, served many ways, chicken kebabs, egg-plant salad, veggie pita, hummus and chips, pita chips, yam fries, poutine—including a "supreme" version with red onion, candied jalapenos and chipotle mayo.

Best bet: The falafel! Three perfectly cooked organic falafel balls



The Le Tigre food truck can be found all over Metro Vancouver and offers an exciting take on modern asian street food.

wrapped in a fresh pita with hummus, veggies, pickled turnips and a delicious tahini sauce. Try it with the marinated eggplant.

Good to know: Owner/chef Alex Lyons also designs funky, fabulous sterling silver jewellery.

ETHOS MEDITERRANEAN FOOD

Saltspring Island

What: Greek food truck.

Where: New location in Ganges, Saltspring Island, at 133 Hereford Avenue at the corner of Jackson Street.

Contact: 250-221-1214, ethosfoodtruck.com

Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Seating: Tables and chairs can accommodate about 14 people.

On the Menu: Classic pita wraps (gyros, chicken souvlaki, Greek meatball, and tofu), full Greek dinners with rice, salad and herbed potatoes, mezethes (sides) like tzatziki, Greek salad and organic rice pilaf, baklava. Daily specials, gluten-free options and group orders.

Best Bet: The phyllo pastry spinach pie, served every Friday. Buy a slice for \$4, or an entire pie to take

home for \$17.

Good to Know: Co-owner Suzanne Gay's family operated a Greek food stall 30 years ago from an Airstream trailer at Saltspring Island's Saturday Market.

EL LOCO TACO

Saltspring Island

What: Mexican food truck.

Where: Fulford-Ganges Road, in Ganges, Saltspring Island (in front of the marina).

Contact: 250-221-0915

Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday to Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday.

Seating: Tables and chairs for eight to 10 diners.

On the Menu: Authentic Mexican tacos, burritos, tortilla soup, daily specials, Mexican soft drinks and hot sauces.

Best Bet: Carne asada tacos, with lime pickled onions, shredded cabbage, salsa, and hot sauce on warm, white corn tortillas, washed down with a lime Jarritos.

Good to Know: Won the Saltspring Island Chamber of Commerce New Business Award in 2014.

MAINLAND'S Best FOOD TRUCKS

GREAT FOOD TRUCKS AREN'T LIMITED TO THE ISLANDS. HERE ARE SEVEN OF OUR FAVOURITES FROM THE REST OF B.C.

LE TIGRE Metro Vancouver

What: An eye-popping yellow and orange-striped truck serving finger-licking modern Asian street food in and around Vancouver. Notable design detail: echoing vintage propaganda posters, the truck's kaleidoscopic paintwork includes proudly raised arms wielding chopsticks and cooking utensils.

Where: Various Metro Vancouver locations—follow them on Twitter (@LeTigreTruck) for daily updates.

Contact: 604.613.6963, letigrecuisine.ca

Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, plus local farmers markets and night markets on summer weekends.

Seating: Takeout.

On the Menu: Elevating truck food

to a cheeky art form, the innovative line-up here includes chunky beet fries, egg-topped Kick Ass Rice bowls (add chicken or pork belly for the full effect) and the ever-changing Miso Awesome: a generously-heaped salad tossed with miso dressing that changes weekly depending on the fresh ingredients sourced from local markets.

Best Bet: The top-selling Fricken Chicken is an understandably addictive menu mainstay: crispy-coated fried chicken made with chilies, garlic and shallots and served with Thai-style nam jin sauce.

Good to Know: Le Tigre is aiming to open an izakaya-style restaurant on the Chinatown side of Vancouver's Main Street this summer. They're planning to park their food truck outside on most evenings.

BITE FRESH FOOD

Nelson

What: A yellow Chevrolet food truck on Nelson's historic Baker Street, serving a "modern mountain menu" of organic-focused wraps, hot dogs and gourmet burgers. Notable design detail: an abundance of stainless steel checker plate trim recalls the golden age of North American diners.

Where: 750 Baker Street, Nelson.

Contact: 250-551-2483, bitetruck.com

Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday.

Seating: Takeout—there's a park nearby.

On the Menu: Grade A, hormone-free burgers (veggie versions and gluten-free buns also available) plus wraps from West Coast salmon to mango curry chicken. Need fries with your bacon cheese dog? Add the patriotic Great Canadian Poutine: skin-on fries topped with bacon, maple syrup, house-made gravy and a generous smattering of cheese curds from Quebec.

Best Bet: The irresistible Luxe Burger is everything factory-made fast food will never be. A double-cream Brie cheeseburger teamed with bacon, tomato, lettuce, red onions and garlic aioli. Loosen your belt and dive right in—especially if you've added a pile of house-made fries.

Good to Know: Time your visit for June 26, July 24 or August 21 when Bite helps transform Baker Street into MarketFest, an evening al fresco party of artsy stalls, live music and community good times.



HAMMER'S HOUSE OF HOG

Oliver

What: A wood-sided shack on wheels with a red tin roof, the heady aromas from this authentic southern "low and slow" barbecue truck easily override the GPS systems of passing highway motorists. Notable design detail: its timber trim was recycled from an old Ontario barn.

Where: 6018 Main Street, Oliver (across from Chevron).

Contact: 250-535-3700, houseofhog.ca

Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday (closed some Tuesdays).

Seating: Takeout—some picnic table perches, plus spots on the grass under the fruit trees.

On the Menu: Utilizing a heap of hickory wood and two hardworking smokers out the back, Hammer's carnivorous roster includes slow-cooked, melt-in-your-mouth rib tips and spicy baked beans that have their own loyal local following.

Best Bet: The bulging pulled pork sandwich—its super-soft meat cooked for up to 12 hours—is served on locally made buns and topped



Left and Right: The Locovore Food Truck in Squamish offers farm-to-table ingredients in hearty salads and sandwiches.

with crisp house slaw. The best part? Choosing which of the four own-made sauces to slather it with—try the tangy Alabama white sauce (mayonnaise, black pepper and a dash of vinegar).

Good to Know: Thursday is brisket day, which means fuelling-up the old smokers with white oak and cooking the truck's butter-soft beef for up to 16 hours. Arrive early and order as much as you can carry.

CULINARY INK Kelowna

What: A bicycle-hybrid food cart focused on "socially conscious comfort food," including Indian and Vietnamese-influenced naan bread taco cones and bulging sub-style sandwiches. Notable design

detail: built from scratch, the nifty 1.8-metre-long cart includes its own Bluetooth music system.

Where: 1620 Dixon Avenue, Kelowna.

Contact: 778-363-2433, culinaryink.com

Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday to Friday; 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Saturday; 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Sunday.

Seating: Takeout.

On the Menu: A revolving roster drawn from eight staple dishes—each with clever fusion twists—including pulled pork and kimchi grilled cheese subs and butter chicken naan cones served with cumin and mint coleslaw. Looking for the ultimate comfort grub? Dive



into the chipotle mac 'n' cheese, piled high with pulled pork and wrapped in a chewy garlic naan.

Best Bet: Go for the spicy taco al pastor: succulent, slow-roasted pork in a pineapple, oregano and chili-infused sauce, sprinkled with feta, onion and cilantro and wrapped in a pillowy naan-bread cone. Still peckish? It's served with a side of garlic butter popcorn.

Good to Know: Culinary Ink aims to donate 10 percent of its profits to charity.

LOCAVORE FOOD TRUCK Squamish

What: A huge, white-painted catering rig focused on fresh, farm-to-table ingredients and a menu of hearty salads and sandwiches, Locavore is permanently parked outside its bricks-and-mortar sister café. Notable design detail: at 13.5 metres long, this may be B.C.'s biggest food truck.

Where: 1861 Mamquam Road, Squamish (outside the Cloudburst Café).

Contact: 604-898-1969, locavorefoodtruck.ca

Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Wednesday to Sunday.

Seating: In the adjacent café (where organic coffee is also served).

On the Menu: Favouring top-notch B.C. farm ingredients such as Pemberton Meadows beef and Two Rivers chorizo sausage, Locavore's entrée-sized salads include roasted cauliflower and brown rice quinoa varieties. Popular made-to-order sandwiches include the bacon, egg, cheese (and bacon jam) Farmhand as well as the arugula-lined rotisserie pork Porchetta baguette.

Best Bet: The spice-tastic, Vietnamese-style Banh Mi baguette sandwich combines succulent rotisserie chicken or pork loin with lashings of cilantro, jalapenos and daikon pickles. Add a side order of herb-roasted potatoes and you'll have the day's main meal.

Good to Know: Locavore's kale, mushroom and quinoa veggie burger isn't just for meat-free diners: it's been adapted by some locals into the off-menu Hypocrite Burger—complete with bacon.

THE TACO CLUB Revelstoke

What: It took four months to convert a 1996 Grumman truck into Revelstoke's favourite Mexican-flavoured pit stop. But it wasn't until a disused

downtown wine bar was added to the mix that the problem of locals queuing in the winter snow was solved. Now, orders are prepared in the truck and served inside. Notable design detail: the truck's eye-catching all-pink paintjob.

Where: 107 2nd Street East, Revelstoke.

Contact: 250-837-8535, thetacoclub.ca

Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily.

Seating: In the bar.

On the Menu: A greatest hits roster of Mexican classics, prepared with fusion tweaks and as many locally-sourced ingredients as possible (these guys are farmers market devotees). Consider the pork, beef or chicken tacos, burritos, enchiladas or tortas—and add some special Taco Club hot sauce to the mix.

Best Bet: The mouthwatering grilled whitefish tacos are made with fresh, house-made pear salsa—with fruit from the Okanagan. Add a Latin-themed cocktail or a glass of own-made ginger beer and you'll have the perfect sunny-day lunch.

Good to Know: DJ nights were staged inside last winter but the plan this summer is to build a 50-seat patio so diners can catch some rays while scoffing their tacos.

FAT DUCK MOBILE EATERY Vancouver

What: This Vancouver-based blue and white-painted former newspaper delivery truck takes a "slow food served fast" approach, with a menu of clever fusion dishes speckled with local and international influences. Notable design detail: the truck's striking logo combines a waddling bird with attendant white maple leaves.

Where: Typically the corner of Howe Street and West Cordova Street in downtown Vancouver. Check Twitter (@fatducktruck) for location updates.

Contact: 604-831-0453, fatduckmobileeatery.ca

Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, plus weekend markets and events.

Seating: Takeout.

On the Menu: Classic dishes reinvented, including duck confit Philly-style ciabatta bun sandwiches (parmesan mayo, Swiss cheese and pickled red onions included) and the popular Hawaiian Hog (bacon and shredded braised pork slathered with charred pineapple and fennel salsa served on a brioche bun).

Best Bet: The Dirty Rice Bowl keeps downtown's office-worker clientele well fueled for the afternoon. A mouth-

watering mélange of pork belly, crisp scallions, Kung Pao mayo and duck-confit-cooked rice, it's topped with a perfectly gooey sunny-side-up egg.

Good to Know: You can keep tabs on the latest location of Fat Duck—and other local trucks—via the handy Street Food App (streetfoodapp.com/Vancouver).



Bite Fresh Food in Nelson serves these mountain folks a modern mountain menu.

Street Food App (streetfoodapp.com) keeps track of which food trucks are open at any given time in Vancouver and Victoria.

DISCLAIMER: Food trucks have wheels! While every effort was made to bring you the most accurate information in this article, some food trucks may have rolled to new locations since press time.



Craft
BEEER
B.C.

FOR LOVERS OF FINE ALES
AND LAGERS, BRITISH
COLUMBIA HAS NEVER BEEN
BETTER. VIVA LA CRAFT BEER
REVOLUTION!

By
JOE WIEBE



EVERY SEPTEMBER SINCE 1993, beer lovers have converged in Victoria, British Columbia for the Great Canadian Beer Festival. Last September, the two-day event hosted more than 8,500 thirsty beer fans who had the opportunity to choose from more than 250 beers from 78 breweries—including 15 B.C. craft breweries that were not even open just one year earlier.

To put that into context, there weren't even 15 breweries in existence in B.C. when the GCBF began in 1993. Gerry Hieter, who co-founded the festival with John Rowling and has produced it ever since, says the inaugural event featured 70 different beers from 23 breweries from Canada and the Pacific Northwest. Hieter, who had previously been involved with starting up Whistler Brewing and Lighthouse Brewing, has been watching B.C.'s craft beer industry grow from its nascent beginnings in the 1980s.

And grow it certainly has: Today there are nearly 100 craft breweries in B.C., spread throughout the province from Tofino on the west coast of Vancouver Island to Fernie, near the Alberta border, and from Victoria all the way north to Terrace.

When Hieter started the GCBF, he encountered lots of scepticism about the future of the industry, but he says he is not at all surprised by the growth. "I



honestly always thought it would be this big or bigger. Being on the ground all the time, I could see it happen one beer at a time, one person at a time. There was never a doubt in my mind that we would be where we are today."



B.C. BEER HISTORY Before looking at where B.C.'s craft beer industry is today, it's important to take a look at where it came from. For that, we have to go all the way back to 1980. Back then, if you were drinking beer in B.C., there were three national breweries you could choose from: Carling O'Keefe, Labatt and Molson. In reality, there was no true competition between them. They all charged the same price, and when brewery workers went on strike—as they did a few times in the 1970s—all the breweries would shut down in unison.

John Mitchell, the manager of the Troller Ale House in Horseshoe Bay, was "so incensed" by this situation that he decided to build his own brewery. After reading an article on home brewing in *Harrowsmith* magazine, he contacted the author, Frank Appleton, and asked him to help build it. Appleton, who had previously worked at Carling O'Keefe in Vancouver, but had left because of the inferior quality of the beer, agreed.

Together, they cobbled together dairy equipment to build the Horseshoe Bay Brewery, Canada's first "microbrewery," which is the term the government used to differentiate it from the big national breweries for taxation purposes. The brewery produced one beer only, a British-style mild ale called Bay Ale. Mitchell says the brewery could produce 30 kegs per week, but even though the Troller Ale House had only managed to sell about two kegs of Carling O'Keefe per day before the brewery opened, it had no trouble selling five kegs of Bay Ale, every day, six days per week. Others soon took notice.

Mitchell teamed up with architect Paul Hadfield to build Spinnakers in Victoria, which was Canada's first brewpub when it opened in 1984, and later helped design Howe Sound Brewing Company in Squamish in 1996. Appleton consulted on a string of breweries and brewpubs throughout the Pacific Northwest, including Swans Brewpub in Victoria, Yaletown Brewing Company in Vancouver and Deschutes Brewery in Bend, Oregon.

The microbrewery movement expanded across British Columbia, thanks to early expansion-minded pioneers such as Granville Island Brewing (established

1984; bought by Molson-Coors in 2009), Vancouver Island Brewery (established as Island Pacific Brewing in 1984; renamed in 1992), Okanagan Spring Brewery Ltd. (established 1985; bought by Sleeman in 1996), Shaftebury Brewing Company (1987 to 1999) and Whistler Brewing Company (established 1989; went through various ownership changes beginning in 1999 before returning to Whistler in 2009).

In the 1990s, the phenomenon became relatively well-known and popular, especially in the urban southwest corner of the province. Beer lovers could feel fairly certain that asking for a "microbrew" from a server at a pub or restaurant in Victoria or Vancouver wouldn't result in a blank stare. There were other pockets of interest elsewhere in the province, too, such as the Kootenays, where Nelson Brewing

Company opened in 1991, and the Okanagan, where Tin Whistle Co. and Tree Brewing opened in the mid-1990s.



THE BIRTH OF CRAFT BEER By 2000, there were 25 microbreweries or brewpubs in B.C., still mostly centred in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island. The 2000s were a period of gradual growth, but several important things happened in that decade that paved the way for what was to come. First of all, and most importantly, was a significant rebranding that amounted to a simple change in vocabulary: "craft beer" replaced "microbrewing." Instead of a bureaucratic term that means "small beer," craft beer carries much more meaning and value, connect-



Crowds like this one at Burnaby's Dageraad Brewing are a common sight in tasting rooms across the province.

ing more significantly with artisanal producers, the local food movement, and creative, artistic, community-minded people in a much more effective way.

Another important change was the advent of craft beer-focused private liquor stores. When the B.C. government first allowed "cold beer and wine stores" in the 1990s, they generally stocked the same merchandise as was available at government-run stores, but in the 2000s some began selling specialty beers from Belgium and Germany and craft beer from south of the border. These new products opened consumers' minds and palates to greater possibilities and challenged B.C. craft breweries to step

up their games in response. Eventually, these "bottle shops" created a secondary network where smaller breweries could sell their products without needing to meet the high volume requirements of the government store network. Today, more than half of B.C.'s craft breweries don't bother trying to obtain general listings for their products in the government store system—because they don't need to.

Also important was the arrival of the "taphouse," a pub or restaurant that offers a wide array of craft beer on tap—sometimes 50 or more taps—which promotes variety and experimentation among consumers and encourages brewers to collegially compete with one another to come up with new styles and improve on established brands. B.C.'s original taphouse was the Alibi Room in



Vancouver, which began focusing on beer in 2006, but the concept has since spread well beyond the city.

Growlers, too, played an important role. These refillable jugs had been around in limited use since Nanaimo's Longwood Brewpub first began offering them in 2000, but they finally started clicking into public consciousness around 2010 in Victoria, and a little bit later in Vancouver and elsewhere. When Tofino Brewing Company opened in 2011, it did so with a growler focus, mainly out of environmental reasons. But growlers took off far beyond the brewery's expectations, and other startups, such as Powell River's Townsite Brewing Inc. and North Vancouver's Bridge Brewing Company, enjoyed similar success adopting the same model.

As more and more craft breweries have opened throughout B.C., related enterprises such as hop and barley farmers, brewery equipment producers, tour

operators and beer festivals have also grown and expanded.



THE BOOM In 2010, there were 40 craft breweries operating in B.C. Three opened in 2011, and when eight opened in 2012, it marked the biggest-ever expansion and brought the total to more than 50 province-wide. But what happened next was astonishing: nine new breweries opened in 2013, along with three new separate production breweries built by established brewpubs; and then a staggering 21 new breweries opened in 2014.

Most meaningfully, perhaps, is how the expansion of interest in craft beer has occurred in regions outside of the established urban centres: new breweries have opened in northern communities such as Prince Rupert, Terrace and Quesnel, out on the Alberta border in Valemount,

in southeastern B.C. in communities such as Cranbrook, Kimberley, Rossland and Invermere and on Vancouver Island in Courtenay, Cumberland and Tofino. One-brewery towns such as Kamloops, Nelson and Kelowna have gained new operations, and multiple breweries have opened in bursts in Abbotsford, Maple Ridge and Port Moody.

The place that has seen the biggest growth, by far, is Vancouver, where a dozen new breweries have opened since 2012. Prior to that, no new breweries had opened in the city since 1998. Add another dozen new breweries in the suburbs around the city and the Lower Mainland is clearly the epicentre of this current craft beer boom.



KEEPING IT LOCAL Most of these new breweries are focused on serving

their local communities or even just their neighbourhoods. When Steel & Oak Brewing Company opened in New Westminster last year, it found a group of local beer lovers ready and waiting, many of them people who had moved out from Vancouver in search of more affordable housing; the brewery's tasting room has become a community hub despite its less-than-ideal location. The same can be said for Burnaby's Dageraad Brewing, Delta's Four Winds Brewing Company and Saanichton's Category 12 Brewing, all of which enjoy brisk business in their tasting rooms despite locations in non-descript industrial parks.

Much of this can be traced back to the provincial government's early 2014 announcement allowing breweries to open on-site tasting lounges where they can serve beer by the glass as well as fill growlers. This new model has been a huge success in Vancouver, where clusters of small breweries with tasting lounges have formed along Main Street; around Clark Drive and Adanac Street; and near Victoria Avenue and Powell Street. It has also proven to be an ideal model for breweries opening in smaller communities such as Courtenay, Powell River, Port Moody and Gibsons.

The new lounge-focused model allows breweries to connect directly with their own communities or neighbourhoods. Breweries recognize the importance of variety and put new styles on tap often, which brings customers back regularly. Consumers love the close connection they have with the brewery—and often directly with the people who make the beer.

Rather than trying to take over the whole market with one beer as the big, multinational brewing conglomerates seem intent to do, craft breweries have recognized for a while now that variety is what drives the interest in artisanal beer. Most breweries produce a wide range of beer styles, and many release one-off "pilot batches" in their tasting rooms, which are often only available by the glass, once again reinforcing a direct connection between the brewer and the customer.

This local focus is the model that Michael Lewis adopted when he and his wife decided to move from Victoria to Valemount, near Jasper on the B.C.-Alberta border, to open Three Ranges Brewing Company in 2013. Given the scale of travel to the nearest urban centres—three-and-a-half hours to either Kamloops or Prince George—distributing beer throughout the north or down to the Lower Mainland was simply not feasible. But with a population of only about 1,000 residents, and a fairly limited local economy, would Three Ranges be able to sell enough beer to make ends meet?

The answer was definitely and resoundingly *yes*. "We expanded our capacity twice in the first 17 months," Lewis explains. "All last summer I sold out of beer, and even last winter, if I'd pushed for new sales, I could have sold out if I wanted to. We are on the hunt right now for a semi-automated canner, because based on the capacity we can now produce we won't be able to keep up with [manual] packaging this summer."

Lewis says he often turns down requests from liquor stores in the Lower Mainland that want to sell his beer, but that was never his intent anyway. Rather, he will continue to support his region, from Kamloops to Prince George, and perhaps over to Jasper if he can find a distributor in Alberta.

The craft beer boom is happening province wide in communities big and small. Fernie Brewing in southeast B.C. is just one example.

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WHAT'S NEXT? Another 15 to 20 breweries are slated to open in 2015, which will bring the provincial total to more

than 100—in other words, doubling the number of craft breweries in B.C. in less than three years. In terms of overall beer consumption, the big breweries still dominate the marketplace, but craft beer has grown from a share of about six per cent of the beer produced in B.C. in 2008 to more than 20 per cent at the end of 2014. This growth does not seem to be slowing down, and a glance south of the border at similar markets in Washington and Oregon, where consumption rates of craft beer is twice what it is here, shows that there is potential for much more expansion still to come.

Back at the Great Canadian Beer Festival, Gerry Hieter is working on his succession plan. He has been running the festival for 23 years now and envisions it continuing for that many years or more in the future, so it is time to start "turning over the reins" to the next generation.

"I see the industry doubling in size," he says, and given his track record predicting the current boom, who is going to argue with him? Viva la Craft Beer Revolution! 🍻

For More Information

For a complete listing of breweries province wide, by region, visit bcmag.ca.



We'd love to call it a cliché, but beards and craft beer truly do go hand in glove, as shown by these two at Deep Cove Brewers and Distillers in North Vancouver.