

A honey of a restaurant comes to Ruch

BY DIANA COOGLE

Colin Cox, owner-chef of the new Honeysuckle Café in Ruch, might not have learned to cook from Julia Child, but she would have approved of his style. “You don’t have to cook fancy or complicated masterpieces,” she said, “just good food from fresh ingredients.” That’s precisely what you’ll find at the Honeysuckle Café.

“This is the template we’ve been wanting to do for years,” Colin says, “a breakfast-lunch restaurant that sources local ingredients.”

It was the source of those local ingredients in the Applegate that was the key selling point for the Coxes to buy the restaurant next to the Ruch Country Store. Colin, who is originally from Ashland, along with his wife and business partner, Monique, moved here last summer from northern Idaho, where Colin had been a corporate chef, working 50-60 hours a week. If he had to work that hard, he thought, he should be working for himself and have time to be with his family.

Coming back to southern Oregon

after 20 years, Colin looked around the Applegate and thought, “Wow! This place has really taken off—good farms, all the wineries. It’s like Southern France!” The restaurant for sale in Ruch seemed the perfect opportunity to fulfill the template.

He and Monique could lease the building and equipment without having to buy the business. “We could make it our own and do it our own way,” Colin says.

Monique identifies their “own way” as “scratch cooking” and “using local vendors as much as possible.” For instance, they pickle locally sourced carrots for the Bánh Mì (Vietnamese sandwich) on the menu. They make their own molé for Mexican-style dishes, their own sauces for the noodle bowls, and their own hollandaise sauce, which, Monique says, is so different from the over-salted commercial variety that people don’t even recognize it.



Honeysuckle Cafe owners Colin and Monique Cox cook from scratch using fresh ingredients from local vendors. Photo: Tom Carstens.

“We’re trying to get each component touched by the Applegate or made by Colin’s hand,” Monique says.

They give a lot of credit for the restaurant’s success since its opening on July 14, 2015, to the Applegate purveyors who supply them with the fresh ingredients that make great food: Rise-up! Artisan Bakery for bread; By George Farm for cheese; Pennington Farms for berries; Moon Shadow and Do-re-mi farms for eggs; Whistling Duck and Wandering Fields farms for vegetables; Wooldridge Creek Winery and Guzzo Family Vineyard for wine; Martha Straube, who raises grass fed-and-finished Dexter beef, for beef. “We couldn’t be doing what we’re doing without these people helping us. There are amazing resources right here,” Monique says.

Monique also makes her own cocktail mixes. She is glad to make a Bloody Mary, an old-fashioned, or a greyhound, but she and Colin emphasize that the Honeysuckle Café is not a bar; it’s a community restaurant.

“We appeal to a broad base of people,” Colin says: “farmers, neighbors, folks from the Fellowship, forest service workers who would come in during the fires last summer. We developed a menu to appeal to everybody”—vegetarian selections as well as meat, gluten-free bread, or farm-fresh eggs by request. As for allergies, Colin accommodates.

The Honeysuckle Supper Club is another popular community-based function at the Honeysuckle Café. Once a month Colin and Monique announce a date for a dinner to showcase their specialties. Jim Sartorio, a frequent Honeysuckle diner from the Little Applegate, says the Supper Club dinners are “pretty darn good.”

Colin recognizes that it’s a “pretty cool time to be a chef,” but he dismisses the idea of cooking as art, saying it’s “just a job.”

“It’s a blue-collar job,” he says, “not an art form. It’s no more glamorous than being a mechanic.”

Nonetheless, Colin enjoys the “art” aspect of creating good food. He likes foods with “strong, punchy flavors,” foods that rely on freshness. He likes food with big contrasts, such as Bánh Mì, where “sweetness plays off the heat.” He experiments with Mediterranean, Asian, and Mexican recipes, altering them to fit his whim. “I don’t have to stick to traditional Bánh Mì,” he says. “I’m not Vietnamese. I can change it as I like.”

If cooking is “just a job,” it’s a job Colin Cox is good at.

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The Honeysuckle Café is located at 7360 Highway 238 in Ruch. Phone: 541-702-2525. Visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/The-Honeysuckle-Cafe-646255768840407/>.

■ WILLIAMS

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by knowing who has lost or found a dog, if fire threatens homes, or where and when cultural events take place. People can weigh in on projects such as the Traffic Safety Action Committee’s strategies for calming traffic in downtown and other areas of Williams.

The Internet saves time, but the community heart keeps ticking because of the in-person meetings that take place. The town council convenes on issues of community concern as they arise, such as spraying roadside weeds, which threatens Williams’ organic cachet. Like-minded people get together to solve problems, raise awareness, and energize others. A broad spectrum of activities caters to horse lovers, environmental preservationists, children, the artistically inclined, and so much more.

Without the many volunteer organizations and other public-oriented services, Williams would be a collection of isolated families. Instead, Jo’s List is full of emails from people looking to move to this vibrant community. It takes work and dedication to maintain the elements that make up Williams’ sense of community, but it makes Williams a pleasant and, above all, a civilized place to live.

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Note: If you would like to write an article like this about your own community, please let us know. Email gater@applegater.org.

Voices of the Applegate Spring Concerts

Voices of the Applegate will hold its spring concerts on Friday, April 1, in the Old Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville and on Sunday, April 3, at the Applegate River Lodge. The four-part harmony selections present a variety of styles and subject matter from the Beatles to Simon and Garfunkel and from madrigals to the old Hebrew song, “Oseh Shalom” (He Who Makes Peace).

Our community choir is just beginning its fifteenth year of performances, and we are delighted to have Blake Weller as our director to teach and inspire us.

Find us on Facebook under “Voices of the Applegate,” and listen to selections from “The Magnificat” as it was performed at the Applegate River Lodge. When you visit Facebook, don’t forget to “Like” us!

We always welcome new singers, whether or not you read music. Each member pays tuition of \$55, which covers the cost of our director, accompanist, music, venues, and a few scholarships.

For more information, call Joan Peterson at 541-846-6988.

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