



THE WAYFARER OYSTER BAR

Brian Ng, Eddie Rideout,
and Andrew Seymour

This culinary trio is informally known as “The Oyster Boys.” Brian Ng, Eddie Rideout, and Andrew Seymour are the guys behind The Wayfarer Oyster Bar, travelling with their barrel and condiments to shuck, serve, and talk about oysters, regaling old hands with stories and lore, and calming the nerves of those new to the delicacy with clear descriptions of what flavours to look for and how best to slurp those East or West Coast beauties down.

You can find them at Woodcutter’s Blanket (a downtown Whitehorse cocktail bar) on Wednesday evenings or at Winterlong Brewing Co. (just outside of downtown Whitehorse) on Saturday afternoons. You can also hire them for a private party this winter—but it’s best to catch them early because winter is their busiest season.

Rideout and Seymour met in Iqaluit in the mid-2000s and again in Ottawa a few years later. Both hung out at the Whalesbone Oyster Bar—Rideout as a customer and Seymour as a cook. “I’d sit at the end of the bar by myself, have some drinks and oysters, and do some schoolwork,” Rideout recalls. For Seymour, the Whalesbone kitchen was an introduction to the world of fresh oysters. “I’d cooked in many restaurants before, but I’d never been that close to the culture of opening and serving fresh oysters.”

The friends brought that culture with them when they moved to Whitehorse. “That guy [Seymour] was here for about four days when he said, ‘Hey, there’s nobody doing oysters here. We should do it,’” Rideout says. And so they did. They started The Wayfarer Oyster Bar in 2015 and soon became a fixture at bars, private parties, conventions, and special events in Whitehorse and Dawson City.

Ng joined the team in 2016. “I just followed them around bugging them until they gave me a shucker and put me to work,” he says. Ng grew up in Whitehorse kitchens, a latchkey kid whose parents ran a Chinese restaurant. His dad taught him how to hold a knife and both parents taught him how to cook. He served tables at a Greek-Italian Whitehorse restaurant and travelled to Thailand where he picked up a love for Thai cuisine to add to the Chinese and Mediterranean cuisines he already loved.

Armed with Ng’s culinary enthusiasm, the partners have expanded the business into pop-up dinners at Whitehorse’s Baked Café. They collaborate with local retailers like The Collective Good, Corked, and Cultured Fine Cheese on these dining events. “It’s nice to build a sense of community with other businesses, especially those involved in the food industry,” Ng says. They work with local farmers, too, and turn to Riverside Grocery, in Whitehorse, when they need something unusual like sunchokes or dandelion greens.

There’s a distant dream of having their own space, but for now The Wayfarer Oyster guys are happy working in their host venues. “We have ambition, but we’re patient,” Rideout says. “We want to do it with love. That’s what we’ve always said.”



CULINARY ENTREPRENEURS

Meet some of Whitehorse’s creative epicures

By Miche Genest | Photos by GBP Creative

THE TWISTED GOURMET Deborah Turner-Davis

Deborah Turner-Davis is a self-described “serial entrepreneur” who can’t do anything by halves. “I have to do it by excess,” she says, laughing. Turner-Davis started a clothing store in Yellowknife at the age of 21, ran a sewing business in Iqaluit, and taught dancing and made jewellery in Whitehorse, all while raising three kids and often holding down another full-time job.

Her latest “excess” is creating the herb and spice blends that go into the small brown packets labelled “The Twisted Gourmet, Wild Yukon Spice Blends,” available in Yukon grocery stores and at craft fairs during the holiday season. Turner-Davis typically sells 1,600 to 1,800 spice packets from early- to mid-December.

The idea for The Twisted Gourmet venture emerged three years ago, but the seed was planted long before. Turner-Davis’ grandmother was an old-fashioned farm cook. “She made everything with a spoonful of this and a handful of that—never measured, trusted her instincts—and she talked me through her cooking that way.” Turner-Davis’ mother contributed “a sort of fearlessness about being out in the woods” and taught her about wild foods in the forests of the Sunshine Coast.

Confidence in the kitchen, a love of foraging, and a passion for experimentation provide the fuel for the business. Turner-Davis has always brought back spice blends or salts from her travels abroad, whether to Vancouver or Morocco, packing small plastic bags and clothespins with her for the exotica she knows she’ll collect. “I’m the condiment woman,” she says, “I’m the weird flavours lady.”

Right now she’s obsessed with preserved lemons. She brines them, dries them in one of four food dryers in her aromatic kitchen,



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grinds them, and then mixes them with saffron and other spices for her Meet Me in Marrakesh blend.

Turner-Davis is also discovering wild northern flavours, foraging yarrow, spruce tips, and pasture sage on the clay cliffs behind her Whitehorse home. “They’re starting to really inform my product development now,” she says. Her Gray Mountain Italian blend combines yarrow, wild sage, and rosemary to create a northern take on Mediterranean seasonings.

Though she’s had offers to expand her business, Turner-Davis says she’s not interested.

“What I’m doing now gives me an indisputable reason to be in the woods, to travel,” she says. It’s all learning; it’s all education. That’s what I need from it right now. I don’t need it to be my second full-time job.”

The most rewarding part for Turner-Davis is when a Yukoner tells her they rely on her wild sage and wild cranberry blend for their Christmas dinner. “That’s just magical,” she says.



“... AT THE HEART OF EVERY BITTER I MAKE IS A YUKON FLAVOUR.”

November 2016, and by the end of March 2017 she had doubled production. There are nine bitters in her roster, a few syrups, and a couple of shrubs (drinking vinegars featuring local berries). Her recipes incorporate fireweed, spruce tips, cranberries, and other northern botanicals; bartenders in Whitehorse and Dawson City have invented cocktails using her products, and her friends and fans cook with them.

Now, Tyldesley sells Free Pour Jenny’s products throughout the Yukon, at Calgary’s Vine Arts Wine and Spirits, and on her website (freepourjennys.com). Plus, you can taste her bitters in cocktails at Yukon establishments like the Wheelhouse Restaurant and Woodcutter’s Blanket in Whitehorse, as well as Bombay Peggy’s Victorian Inn & Pub in Dawson City.

Tyldesley thinks she’ll eventually need a larger production space, but doesn’t want to expand too much. She says the business “is labour-intensive, it’s all manual, it’s handcrafted, and small batch by design.”

The family returns from their walk, the youngest bearing a handful of soapberries. “She has intentions of making a drink,” Tyldesley’s husband says. Clearly, concocting runs in the family.

FREE POUR JENNY’S Jennifer Tyldesley

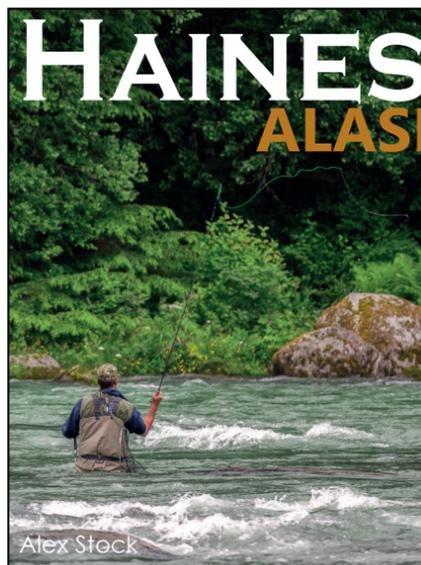
Jennifer Tyldesley, proprietor of Free Pour Jenny’s handcrafted bitters, stands in her kitchen pouring amber-coloured fireweed bitters through a funnel into her signature brown bottles, while her family swirls and eddies around her. Her youngest daughter drops edible flowers into Tyldesley’s water to sweeten it up, and the family departs for a dog walk.

Tinkering in the kitchen, gardening, foraging, and spending time with her family—it’s the life Tyldesley was looking for when she retired from flying aircraft for Air North in 2015. “I was airborne on and off for 25 years, and I loved it,” she says. “But I needed

to explore another part of my personality. [This is] my feet planted on the earth.”

Her entry into the production of small-batch, handcrafted bitters was inspired by her interest in cocktails and curiosity about their magic ingredient: bitters, the alchemic combination of bittering agents, aromatics, and alcohol that ties a cocktail together. Tyldesley first tried the recipe for coffee and pecan bitters from the classic book *Bitters: A Spirited History of a Classic Cure-All, with Cocktails, Recipes, and Formulas*, by Brad Thomas Parsons. “Then I just started playing around with flavours and ratios and with local ingredients. Because at the heart of every bitter I make is a Yukon flavour,” she says.

Tyldesley first sold her Free Pour Jenny’s bitters at a craft fair in Whitehorse, in



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THE WANDERING BISON

Luke Legault

The shelves in the professional kitchen behind Luke Legault's house in the Whitehorse neighbourhood of Porter Creek host an eclectic collection of edibles: dried fireweed petals, truffle oil, dehydrated bee pollen, and dried garlic scapes, to name a few. Legault says there is a system behind the apparent randomness, but it's not based on where items are placed. It's based on a philosophy. "All I want to do is use the highest quality ingredients I possibly can to make the best food I possibly can. The majority of the time that involves finding local, and if it isn't local, it better be damn good," he says.

Legault is the chef-owner of The Wandering Bison, purveyor of fine foods and provider of individually tailored catering services. His artisanal barbecue sauces and mustards first appeared at Wyke's Your Independent Grocer, in Whitehorse, in the spring of 2016, and he's been busy ever since. When he's not producing 12 one-litre jars of barbecue sauce at a time or smoking local pork loin or bacon to sell at Whitehorse's Riverside Grocery, he's interviewing a client who wants to feature the meat from her fiancée's first bison hunt at their wedding.

Two years in culinary management at George Brown College, in Toronto, taught Legault how to manage a kitchen; then 18 months at the Fairmont Banff Springs



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and in other hotel kitchens taught him speed. He helped establish Vancouver's Dirty Apron Cooking School, was the opening sous-chef at Whitehorse's Wheelhouse Restaurant, and worked in fly-in exploration camps, where "you run off a generator and cook out of a canvas tent."

He hadn't intended to cater in Whitehorse, but a chance conversation while he was restocking barbecue sauce in the grocery store led to a catering job for a 2016 meeting of Canada's premiers. Since then, he's averaged two functions a week, including star-studded engagements for the Duke and Duchess of York, the Lieutenant Governor of Alaska, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

Besides the kitchen and the smoking room, the Legaults' property features a greenhouse filled with beets, corn, potatoes, carrots, and herbs. Legault's wife, Erin, is a counsellor and owner of Ignite Counseling, in Whitehorse. She keeps the books for The Wandering Bison and makes sure everything is shipshape at gigs. That enables him to do the rest, with no shortcuts, no tricks, and no sacrificing quality for speed or price point. "I want to know that I'm always doing the right thing," Legault says. "That's the cornerstone I've built this on." **Y**