

TIME TO GET AWAY

TRAVEL

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Taste summer serenity in Nelson

KOOTENAYS: Known for fine slopes, pretty city also has plenty of choice on food and drink menus

CATHERINE ROSCOE BARR
FOR THE PROVINCE

A taste of the culinary scene in picturesque Nelson reveals first-rate food — and plenty of free spirits.

My mother and I have been gifted with all of the Whitewater Cooks (whitewatercooks.com) cookbooks written by Shelley Adams, who formerly owned Whitewater Ski Resort.

That resort recently clinched Nelson's win in Powder magazine as the best ski town in North America — and its legendary restaurant Fresh Tracks Cafe, serving healthy gourmet fare, has spawned the series of cookbooks.

Being a hopeless fan of food, I decided to do a culinary tour of Nelson — a Whitewater Cooks pilgrimage of sorts — stopping by the businesses mentioned on the pages of Adams' books, and discovering a few new spots.

The first night I arrived, my group dined at All Seasons Cafe (allseasonscafe.com), a charming little bistro tucked away on Herridge Lane, where we were greeted and seated on the cosy patio by hands-on owner Paul Archambault, a Californian who came to Nelson on holiday and decided to stay.

As the name suggests, the restaurant's menu is inspired by the seasons, and has used locally sourced, sustainable ingredients since opening in 1995. The extensive wine list is impressive and almost exclusively B.C. labels.

We swooned over the Vancouver Island-seared scallops with hicko-



The Oso Negro cafe's beautifully landscaped gardens provide a great spot to enjoy your coffee. DAVID GLUNS/NELSON KOOTENAY LAKE TOURISM

ry smoked Sloping Hills pork belly and red pepper jalapeno salsa, and the beautifully presented Moroccan spice rubbed B.C. trout with nutmeg-dusted French green beans and a lobster bisque fennel reduction.

The next day I made sure to visit the places that sparked my Nelson culinary tour idea: Oso Negro café,

Silverking Soya Foods and Fresh Tracks Cafe.

Fresh Tracks is only open during ski season, but luckily for me, their newly opened food truck is parked at Whitewater's head office on Lake Street on weekdays during the summer season.

The Oso Negro café is a bustling

community hub located in a heritage home on Ward Street, perpendicular to the main strip on Baker Street.

The café's beautifully landscaped gardens and iron work were a collaborative effort between local artisans and offer plenty of seats to commune with friends or get lost in

a good book. Aside from amazing coffee they have a great selection of baked goods (with plenty of gluten-free and organic options), breakfast sandwiches (be sure to try yours with sprouts), as well as soups and sandwiches for lunch.

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Food, beer and fun found in charming city

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After breakfast at Oso Negro, I walked to Nelson's 116-year-old Kootenay Warehousing building, which was originally an enormous brewery and now houses about half a dozen businesses, including the Oso Negro coffee roastery, the Nelson Brewing Company (nelsonbrewing.com) and Silverking Soya Foods.

I stopped in to say hello to tofu maker and Silverking owner Jeff Mock, who makes seven varieties of organic tofu, handcrafted from organic soybeans sourced from Kansas.

Silverking tofu can be found on numerous menus in restaurants around town and is available for retail at Nelson's Kootenay Co-op and Save On Foods.

Mock started working for the business' former owner doing odd jobs in 1990 after being unable to return to his physically demanding job as a tree planter following injuries suffered during a car accident.

After learning the ropes, Mock purchased the business in 1994 and moved the operations from Silverking Road to its present location in the old brewery.

From soybeans to coffee beans,



The Moroccan spice-rubbed B.C. trout with nutmeg-dusted French green beans can be enjoyed at All Seasons Cafe.

I peeked into the adjacent Oso Negro roastery where head roaster Ned Woods handed me a cup of eye-opening espresso, showed me the wood silos where their fresh beans are stored (almost all of which are organic and fairly traded), and talked me through the roasting of a batch of beans.

Owners Jon Meyer and Jim May

started with a one-kilogram roaster 20 years ago and now, with their coffee served and sold at more than 30 Nelson businesses and more than 100 throughout B.C., their 22-kilogram roaster is running throughout every day.

Next I had a tour of the Nelson Brewing Company with master brewer Mike Kelly, who talked

about the company's 22-year history and the firm's decision to go fully organic in 2006.

I tried a few of their eight current brews, including the new Full Nelson, a complex, tasty Imperial IPA which contains a blend of seven different hops from around the world, including one from Nelson, New Zealand.

Buzzing from caffeine and ale, I power walked to the Fresh Tracks Cafe Express for lunch. The food truck has an abbreviated version of the cafe's menu, with a number of Adams' famous dishes in addition to head chef Amanda Skidmore's delicious creations.

With dessert in mind, I strolled over to Lucky Cupcakes (luckycupcakes.ca) on Baker Street for one of Lisa Lockett's decadent treats.

Lockett, another California transplant, started selling cupcakes at the Nelson farmers market and when sales took off she moved into the pretty little sliver of a store where she now offers two dozen cupcake flavours (like the Choco-Latte chocolate cupcake with Oso Negro coffee buttercream) made with premium ingredients such as organic flour, fair-trade cocoa and Madagascar Bourbon vanilla.



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