

THE Good Life

WHERE WASHINGTON FEELS LIKE HOME

A **ward media** PUBLICATION

Take the long way

The pleasures of stopping
along the way

**Made from
scratch**

Baked with intention

Where
mornings
begin

Gaucha Coffee is
a place to belong

WHERE TIME
slows down

SEPT - OCT 2026

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INSIDE: THEN & NOW | BUILDING NCW | MOVING UP TO THE GOOD LIFE



Photo Courtesy of Gaucha Coffee Co.

A customer places an order at Gaucha Coffee Co. in Cashmere, where coffee, food and a welcoming atmosphere have helped make the shop a community gathering spot.

September / October 2026

Cover photography: Ken Reid

Vol. 20 / No. 5

Take the long way

Two fall drives trade the fastest route for farms, forests, mountain history and the pleasures of stopping along the way. Fall is a season for taking the road that takes a little longer. These two drives through North Central Washington can stand alone or connect at Peshastin, carrying travelers from the open country around Cle Elum across Blewett Pass, then through orchards, farms and mountain communities before returning through Tumwater Canyon.

The Taste of Fall

Local chefs turn North Central Washington's autumn harvest into creative, comforting menus. For Chef Ben Herreid, owner and executive chef of Larch Restaurant Group in Leavenworth, the season is defined by abundance. "Fall means abundance for me," he said. "In the fall that's when everything's available. You wait and wait, and suddenly it's like it's coming out of your ears."

Where Mornings Begin

At two North Central Washington coffee shops, homemade food, warm drinks and familiar faces turn an everyday stop into a place to belong. The first stop of the day can be about much more than coffee. It might be the place where a commuter grabs a breakfast burrito before work, or where a regular walks through the door and is greeted by name.

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Don't rush the season

There's a strange thing that happens this time of year. We start looking ahead before we've finished where we are.

September arrives, and almost immediately we begin talking about fall. Pumpkin everything appears. Halloween decorations go up. We start thinking about colder weather, shorter days and everything that comes with the change of seasons.

Before long, someone will remind us how many shopping days are left until Christmas.

We're very good at moving on.

But September in North Central Washington deserves better than that.

This is one of those rare stretches of the year when two seasons seem to overlap. The mornings can be cool enough for a jacket, while the afternoons still feel like summer. There are boats on the lakes and hikers on the trails, but there are also apples coming off the trees and the first hints of color appearing in the mountains.

The crowds begin to change. The evenings arrive a little earlier. The air feels different.

Summer hasn't completely left us, and fall hasn't completely arrived.

There's something pretty great about that. I think we spend too much of our lives waiting for what comes next.

When we're young, we can't wait to grow up. We want to graduate, start a career, buy a house or build a family. Later, we find ourselves looking toward the next vacation, the next promotion, the next project or eventually retirement.

There is always another milestone somewhere out there.

And there's nothing wrong with looking forward to things. Anticipation is one of life's great pleasures.

The problem comes when we become so focused on what's next that we stop noticing what's now.

September is a good reminder of that.

One of the advantages of living and working in North Central Washington is that

the seasons are difficult to ignore. They shape our landscape, our communities and even the rhythm of our lives.

We know when spring arrives because the orchards tell us.

We know summer is here when the lakes fill with boats, the trails get busy and evenings seem to stretch forever.

Fall announces itself in orchards, vineyards and hillsides.

And winter certainly doesn't need an introduction.

But some of my favorite moments happen between those obvious changes.

It's the September evening when you realize you can still sit outside for dinner but probably should have brought a sweatshirt.

It's driving through orchard country with the windows down and seeing bins beginning to fill.

It's noticing the first signs of fall in the higher country, even while the afternoons down in the valley still feel like summer.

It's having one more afternoon on the water because the weather unexpectedly cooperated.

None of those things are particularly remarkable.

Maybe that's why they're so easy to miss.

We tend to remember the big moments in life — weddings, graduations, vacations, new jobs and major accomplishments. We take pictures of them. We put them on calendars. We celebrate anniversaries of them.

But most of life happens between those moments.

It happens during ordinary dinners and drives home. It happens over cups of coffee, conversations with friends, walks around the neighborhood and afternoons when nothing particularly important happens.

Those moments rarely announce themselves as something worth remembering.

Years later, sometimes they're the ones we wish we could have back.

That's one reason I like what we're trying to do with The Good Life.



This magazine isn't really about telling you how to live a good life. I'm not sure anyone is qualified to do that.

Instead, I hope it encourages all of us to notice a little more of the good life that is already happening around us.

Sometimes that means discovering a trail we haven't explored, a restaurant we haven't tried or a community we haven't spent enough time in. Sometimes it simply means paying attention.

So before we completely surrender to fall, maybe we should give September its due.

Take the drive.

Sit outside a little longer.

Make another trip to the lake.

Walk through town without being in a hurry to get somewhere.

Watch the orchards change.

Notice the cooler morning and the warm afternoon.

There will be plenty of time for pumpkins, falling leaves, cold nights and everything that comes next.

For now, we're here.

And maybe September's invitation isn't to get ready for what comes next.

Maybe it's to notice what's here before it's gone. ■

Terry Ward, Publisher
The Good Life

Our Team



Terry Ward

CEO & Publisher

terry@ward.media



Amy M. Yaley

COO & Co-Owner

amy@ward.media



Taylor Caldwell

Reporter

taylor@ward.media



Quinn Propst

Reporter

quinn@ward.media



Andrew Simpson

Reporter

andrew@ward.media

THE Good Life

ward media, LLC

The Good Life

29 S. Wenatchee Ave., Suite A
Wenatchee, WA 98801

(509) 731-4392

ncwgoodlife.com

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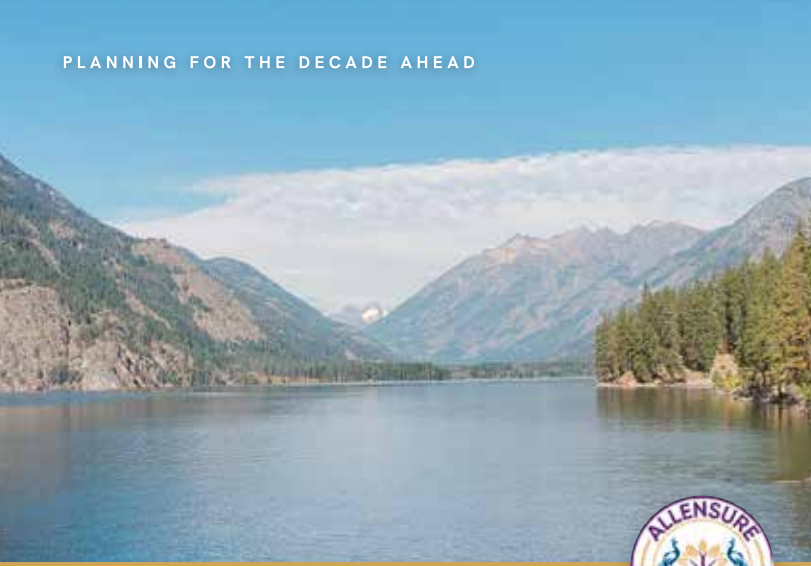
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Feature

Take the long way

Two fall drives trade the fastest route for farms, forests, mountain history and the pleasures of stopping along the way.

Fall is a season for taking the road that takes a little longer. These two drives through North Central Washington can stand alone or connect at Peshastin, carrying travelers from the open country around Cle Elum across Blewett Pass, then through orchards, farms and mountain communities before returning through Tumwater Canyon.

Blewett Pass: Leave the interstate behind

Western Washington has no shortage of reasons to make the trip across the Cascades. There are football games and ferries, the Space Needle and the state Capitol, concerts and museums and everything else that comes with the wetter, more crowded side of the state.

But eventually, you have to come home.

From Seattle, Interstate 90 makes that relatively easy. Cross Snoqualmie Pass, descend toward Cle Elum and the highway is perfectly happy to carry you east at 70 mph.

Don't let it.

If there is an afternoon to spare, leave the interstate at Cle Elum and point the car toward Highway 970 and Blewett Pass instead. Maybe the purpose is to scout next summer's campgrounds. Maybe it is to see what fall has begun doing to the mountains. Maybe, after a weekend spent amid Western Washington traffic and noise, there is simply no reason to hurry back into the routine.

The first few miles make the case. Around Teanaway, irrigated fields and working farms spread beneath forested ridges. Tractors and wheel-line irrigation equipment occupy the foreground while the Cascades rise behind them. It is still working country, but the scale

has changed dramatically from the interstate just a few miles away.

Highway 970 meets U.S. Highway 97 and the road begins its journey toward Blewett Pass. The open country gradually tightens as the highway climbs, passing First Creek, Sauk Prairie and Hidden Valley on its way into thicker forest. Ponderosa pine and fir dominate the slopes, but stands of deciduous trees gather in draws and wetter ground, patches of green in late summer that turn conspicuous shades of yellow as autumn takes hold.

Then come the curves.

The yellow warning signs become a recurring feature of the drive, each bent arrow announcing another turn through the forest. Highway 97 follows the terrain rather than conquering it, bending around hillsides, climbing through narrow valleys and repeatedly

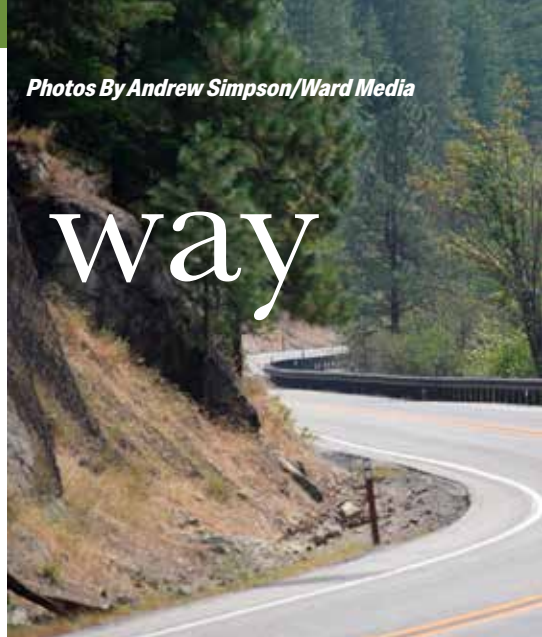
revealing another stretch of mountain country around the next corner.

That is also where the temptation to stop begins. Small roadside pullouts and picnic areas appear along the route, some little more than a table tucked beneath the trees. They are easy to pass when the destination matters more than the journey. On an afternoon devoted to the journey, they become an excuse to get out of the car, stretch your legs and listen to a forest that sounds considerably different without an engine running through it.

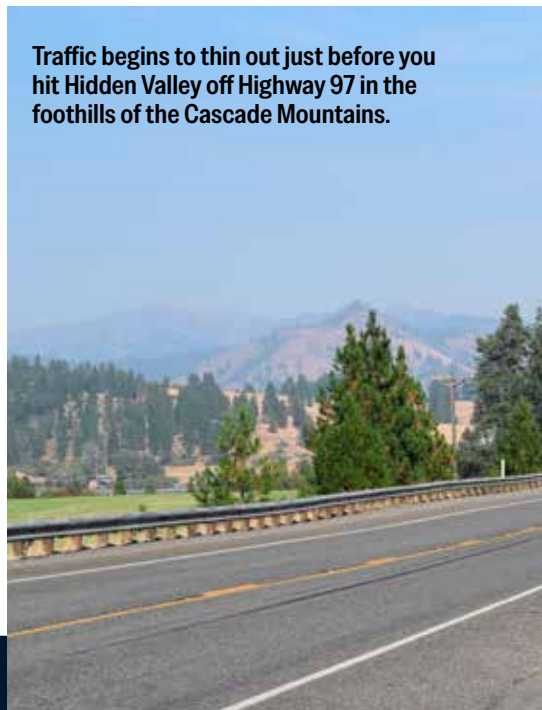
The highway also passes through country with a much older story than today's pavement suggests. Gold discoveries in the 19th century drew prospectors into the mountains, and mining settlements appeared in places that now seem improbably remote. The community of Blewett grew around that activity, while an earlier route across the mountains followed what is now known as Old Blewett Pass Highway.

Today's Highway 97 takes a different path, the result of a later realignment that made

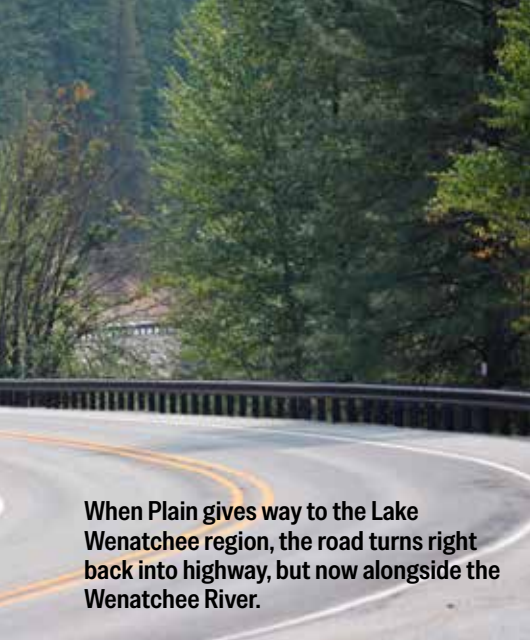
Photos By Andrew Simpson/Ward Media



Blown-out cowboy boots top the fence posts next to the covered wagon along the Chumstick Highway.



Traffic begins to thin out just before you hit Hidden Valley off Highway 97 in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains.



When Plain gives way to the Lake Wenatchee region, the road turns right back into highway, but now alongside the Wenatchee River.



the crossing considerably easier. The old road remains in pieces, a reminder that crossing these mountains once required considerably more patience than deciding whether to stop for a picnic.

Liberty provides another surviving connection to the mining era. The historic community sits off the highway, but travelers on Highway 97 do not have to make the detour to be reminded that they are passing through it. Liberty Cafe provides an unmistakable roadside landmark and an opportunity for another kind of stop before the climb continues.

Past Liberty, the road works deeper into the mountains. Forest closes around the highway, rocky slopes appear between the trees and glimpses into the surrounding country reveal just how far the road has climbed from the farms around Teanaway.

Blewett Pass tops out at 4,102 feet before Highway 97 begins its descent toward the Wenatchee Valley. The forest changes again along the way, eventually loosening its grip as the road follows mountain drainages toward Peshastin Creek. What began among the broad fields near Cle Elum ends among the orchards of Chelan County.

At Peshastin, Highway 97 meets Highway 2. Turning east will get you toward Wenatchee quickly. But by now, that would seem to miss the point.

From orchards to Tumwater Canyon

From Peshastin, Highway 2 offers the obvious route west toward Leavenworth. North Road offers another.

The traffic falls away almost immediately. North Road follows the quieter side of the Wenatchee River through orchard country, winding between the water and hills covered in apple and pear trees. Across the river, old farmhouses and barns sit among orchards that spread across the valley floor and climb toward pine-covered slopes.

A small covered wagon has sat in this spot as long as anyone can remember.

This is not scenery created for visitors. Irrigation lines, farm equipment, utility poles and fruit trees make clear that it is working agricultural country. Yet the Wenatchee River repeatedly appears below the road, sometimes broad and quiet and sometimes partly concealed by trees, while mountains fill more of the horizon as the road approaches Leavenworth.

North Road eventually bends back toward Highway 2 and town. Leavenworth can consume an afternoon by itself, but on this drive it can just as easily serve as a crossroads. Stop for coffee or lunch, walk around for a while, then turn north onto Chumstick Highway and watch the crowds disappear behind you.

Chumstick Highway follows the creek through a narrow valley of forest, homes, pasture and small farms. Pine and fir cover the surrounding slopes while cottonwoods and other deciduous trees cluster around water and homes, adding increasing amounts of yellow as autumn advances.

At Merry Canyon Road, a highway sign neatly summarizes the choice. Leavenworth is nine miles behind you. Plain is five miles ahead.

Choose Plain.

The country opens again as the road approaches the community. Irrigated fields spread across the valley floor beneath walls of dark forest. Ranches, barns and outbuildings replace the dense orchards around Peshastin, and wheel-line irrigation equipment stretches across open pasture.

There are also things no map is likely to recommend. Beside one gravel road, an old covered wagon and milk can sit against the fields. Along the fence beyond it, weathered cowboy boots have been planted upside down atop the posts, some still wearing their spurs. One has spent enough seasons outside for lichen to grow across the leather.

There is no scenic-overlook sign pointing toward it. You simply have to notice.

Continue through Plain toward Lake Wenatchee and



Feature

the landscape closes in once more. Open fields give way to increasingly dense forest as the road heads toward the mountains. Lake Wenatchee itself requires a deliberate turn toward Lake Wenatchee State Park or another access point; the lake is not presented as a roadside vista along this loop.

There is plenty left without it.

Highway 207 turns south toward Coles Corner. From there, Highway 2 heads east and soon enters the most dramatic landscape of the loop.

Tumwater Canyon squeezes the highway, Wenatchee River and mountains into the same narrow passage. Granite walls rise beside the road while the river runs close below it, tumbling through boulders and rapids. Evergreen forest covers the slopes, with deciduous trees along the water bringing another layer of fall color.

The corridor has carried travelers for generations. Indigenous people moved along the Wenatchee River long before permanent white settlement. Wagon roads and railroads followed, including the Great Northern Railway, and eventually the modern highway found its way through the canyon. The same challenge is still obvious from the driver's seat: rock and river do not leave much room between them.

Fortunately, modern travelers have considerably more

comfortable reasons to stop.

The Alps Candy sits beside Highway 2 with the river immediately behind it, the sort of roadside attraction that belongs naturally on a drive with nowhere urgent to be. Brittle, sauces, fudge, taffy and gifts offer one more excuse to pull over before the final run through the canyon.

From there, Highway 2 bends alongside the Wenatchee River until the canyon walls retreat and Leavenworth reappears from the west. Continue through town and the highway follows the river east through orchard country toward Peshastin, completing the loop where the Blewett drive ended.

Neither route requires an entire day. That does not mean either should be rushed.

Together, they show off something that an interstate rarely can: the gradual changes that make Central Washington distinct. Ranch country becomes mountain forest. Mountain forest becomes orchard country. Orchards give way to farms and pasture, then forest closes around the road before granite and rushing water take over in Tumwater Canyon.

The fastest road will still be there tomorrow.

For an autumn afternoon, take the one that gives you a reason to stop. ■

Andrew Simpson: 509-433-7626 or andrew@ward.media



If you're lucky, you'll catch the Liberty Cafe while they're open. If they're not, you're still in luck: It's a long drive with no rest stops, and the cafe has an outdoor bathroom accessible year round.



You'll see a thousand of these "curve ahead" signs, and you'd do well to slow down when you see them.



At Merry Canyon, you can see an example of someone with an idea of what off-grid life is like, just ten miles away from "civilization" back in Leavenworth.

A familiar sight for those visiting from the west side of Washington, The Alps sits at the end of the long drive of Stevens Pass and has candy and jerky waiting for impatient kids in the back seat.



As you approach Plain after the winding road through Chumstick, farmland spreads out when you head back toward the Wenatchee River.

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Moving Up TO THE GOOD LIFE



Eat Your Ice Cream

"Our goal should not be to outlive as many people as possible. Instead, the goal should be to live a healthy and fulfilling life." — Dr. Ezekiel J. Emanuel

Have you noticed that "maxxing" seems to be everywhere? There is looksmaxxing—trying to perfect our appearance. Healthmaxxing—optimizing every bite of food, every workout, every hour of sleep. Even lifemaxxing—trying to squeeze maximum productivity out of every day. The message is always the same: if we just improve ourselves a little more, we'll finally arrive.

I realized recently that I was falling into that trap myself. I was reading everything I could find about longevity, taking notes on nutrition, exercise, inflammation, brain health, sleep, and the latest research. Every week there seemed to be one more thing I "should" be doing. I wasn't becoming unhealthy—I was becoming preoccupied with being healthy. It was stressful. Somewhere along the way, I had stopped asking a simple question: Am I actually enjoying my life?

It turns out I'm not alone. Years ago, psychologist Barry Schwartz found that people who constantly search for the very best—the maximizers—are often less happy than those who choose something that is "good enough" and enjoy it. The endless search for the perfect choice can rob us of satisfaction with the one we've already made.

Perhaps that's why there seems to be a cultural shift underway lately. More people are stepping back from perfectionism and returning to simple, sustainable habits that support a good life instead of consuming it.

That is what drew me to Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel's delightful book, *Eat Your Ice Cream*. The title isn't permission to ignore your health. It's a reminder that healthy living is the means, not the end. The goal isn't to have the perfect body or the perfect blood work. The goal is to build a life so rich in purpose, friendship, curiosity, and joy that you can occasionally enjoy an ice cream cone without guilt.

Interestingly, the latest longevity research doesn't really disagree. Harvard Health recently summarized five pillars of healthy aging: movement, good nutrition, adequate sleep, stress management, and social connection. Dr. David Barzilai, a longevity physician, says the most underrated pillar is social connection. We carefully protect our workouts and count our steps, yet often fail to protect our friendships with the same commitment—even though strong relationships are among the best predictors of a long and healthy life.

That brings us back to Emanuel. One of his favorite suggestions is socialize. Host a dinner party. Why? Because it isn't just about the meal. Planning, cooking, laughing, listening, and lingering around the table nourish something that no supplement ever will. The healthiest part of the evening may not be the food. It may be the friendships.

But for those of us who want to go ahead and literally eat ice cream on occasion, the experts say, go ahead. That makes me think of my grandson, Eli. He recommends



By June Darling
journeytothegoodlife.net

Doane's Valley Pharmacy's Soda Fountain in Cashmere. When I asked why, his answer was immediate: "Because they put ice cream all the way down into the cone."

So yes, take the walk. Eat your vegetables. Get enough sleep. Those habits matter. But don't spend so much time trying to perfect your looks or optimize your health that you forget why you're doing it in the first place. Build a life filled with life.

Then eat your ice cream. Preferably with friends. Some Ideas:

- Socialize and move together. Go on a hike with friends or find some on the way. My husband, John, likes that one in Nahahum we call the cell tower walk. Even if he doesn't start out with friends, he'll find some on the way. I show up for SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life) class or walk around town and say hello to folks.
- Socialize and challenge your brain a bit (and give yourself an excuse to clean up your house), host a weekly dinner party during the upcoming cooler harvest months. It's soup time.
- Socialize and relax. Put on your jacket and go to a football game, take a library watercolor class, go to the weekly community dinner at the Cashmere Community Church. Meet up with others who enjoy the same activity.
- Socialize with a special treat. Invite someone to Doane's or your favorite ice cream shop (Eli likes Plain Grocery Store's cones too). Or add some apple, peach, cherry, or pumpkin pie (I can vouch for the Big Y Cafe for these!)
- Practice a little sufficing ...a bit of "good enough" and put things in perspective. Let go of at least one mental beating this week and simply enjoy the moment. Maybe you lingered over Monday morning coffee and only had time to exercise for thirty minutes instead of sixty. Did any babies die on your watch? If not, take a breath, and enjoy being alive. ■

How might we move up to the Good Life by spending a little less time trying to perfect it and a little more time enjoying it...especially with people we love?

THE
Good Life

Feature

Made from scratch, baked with

intention

When Lindsey and Noah Dahlstrom opened Argonaut Espresso Bar, or Argo Bar, in 2014, their original ideas for the menu were simple. The little walk-up stand at the end of Leavenworth's Front Street would serve two things: coffee and cookies. But Lindsey, the baker of the two, soon latched on to one very specific goal — perfecting the biscuit.

"I was seriously obsessed with figuring it out," said Dahlstrom.

Dahlstrom dove into research and development, working through countless rounds of trial and error. Once perfected, she started baking the biscuits in the tiny walk-up, where they quickly became a signature staple and the foundation for Argonaut's breakfast sandwich.

"People really liked the biscuits," said Dahlstrom. "After a while, it became insane, because it had such a following...We kind of grew out of the space."

As business grew and changed over the years, the biscuits remained steady. When the Dahlstroms opened another location in 2021, they received top billing: Argonaut Coffee & Biscuits.

Today, Argonaut Coffee & Biscuits is a slightly bigger version than its walk-up stand

Lupine Market & Café co-owner Lindsey Dahlstrom holds one of her favorite baked goods: ricotta cake.



By Taylor Caldwell
Ward Media Staff Reporter



Photos By Taylor Caldwell/Ward Media

predecessor. With a substantial menu and limited seating, it self-identifies as a “small but mighty cafe.”

It’s aptly located along US-2 on the west end of town, perfectly positioned to meet people on their way, whether it’s to work, before an adventure, or on the way home from vacation. And the menu reflects it.

“You want a solid breakfast when you’re going to go do something,” said Dahlstrom. “We want to get them in and out quickly, efficiently, with a solid breakfast.”

As Dahlstrom sees it, even a meal meant to fuel your day should be high quality, and it should be delicious too.

“For me, it’s really important that part of the program is that it’s made from scratch. That it’s fresh, and someone made it intentionally, not just to serve as energy for your day,” said Dahlstrom.

This philosophy is ever present in the Dahlstroms’ newest venture, Lupine Market & Café, which opened last year. But alternative to Argonaut, which meets people on the move, Lupine encourages a slower pace.

“We want you to slow down a little bit,” said Dahlstrom. “We want you to come inside, turn off your phone, enjoy the company of who you’re with and have a nice meal.”

Every element of Lupine is a recognition of place and a celebration of the present. The cafe is set away from the bustle of downtown Leavenworth, tucked against mountains and forest that surround the outdoor patio. Inside, the casual seating and adjacent market — featuring hand-picked wine, kitchen goods and gifts — offer an invitation to stop, stay awhile, and enjoy.

That order of enjoyment is apparent in Lupine’s selection of baked goods.

“[Eating is] something we have to do as humans, but I want to enjoy every part of that experience, right?” said Dahlstrom. “Our lives are short, and too short to not enjoy what you’re eating.”

For Dahlstrom, the multigrain mixed berry scone is a perfect breakfast companion to her preferred coffee order — eight-ounce, double-shot Americano with a splash of milk — balancing sweet with bitter, indulgence with heartiness.

Bosket Bread buns sit on the racks to cool.

In the afternoon, she’s reaching for a slice of her current favorite: ricotta cake. In summer, the cake is made with raspberries picked from the local Stellar Produce Farm. As the seasons change, the cake will showcase fall flavors, such as apples and pears.

“I’m just obsessed with it. I think it’s so delicious. It’s moist, but it has crunchy sugar on top...and it’s not too sweet,” said Dahlstrom.

Sourcing local goods and ingredients is woven into Lupine’s ethos. For the bread on Lupine’s sandwiches, the cafe looks to another upper valley baker: Bosket Bread.

On the opposite end of town, Bosket Bread hides between industrial buildings along Chumstick Highway, with few indicators of its presence. If you’re close enough, you may spot the single delivery truck or smell the waft of fresh bakes emanating from the warehouse.

This is by design, as the wholesale bakery is focused on fulfilling high volume orders for grocery stores and restaurants throughout

the Wenatchee Valley. That said, finding Bosket’s bread is a fairly easy task. The bakery supplies bread to a number of restaurants like Leavenworth’s Lupine Market & Café, Yodelin and München Haus — one of its largest accounts.

“When it’s busy for München Haus, we make about 1,500 hoagie buns every single day,” said Riley Bosket, who co-owns



▲ **This ricotta cake is made with locally grown raspberries, but the fruit will change according to the harvest season.**



Feature



Bakers at Bosket Bread package up cinnamon rolls.

the bakery with his brother, Spencer.

In Wenatchee, it can be found in places like the Dilly Deli, McGlinn's Public House and Mission Burgers & Chicken, said Riley.

"We're already kind of this niche wholesale bakery that can do custom products for restaurants," said Spencer. "We have the ability to be flexible and change, whereas bigger businesses can't. Bigger bakeries just have their products and that is what they can produce."

Bosket Bread has continued to grow since it started in 2019. Its early success could be tied back to the family legacy it's built upon. Their dad, Vince Bosket, owned Cashmere's Sure to Rise Bakery for over 30 years.

"We always had fresh bread on the counter," said Riley. "[My brother's] friends would come over and just eat an entire loaf overnight, and they'd always call it that good 'Bosket Bread.'"

When their dad was looking to retire, the brothers saw an opportunity to fill the anticipated wholesale needs of the valley. The name "Bosket Bread" was a

natural fit, and so was the tagline, "Rising Since 1987," which Riley says was a nod to the year both Spencer was born and Vince bought the bakery.

Bosket Bread has forged its own path, but some things remain the same. The sourdough starter, for instance, comes from a long line of bakers, including their dad.

"Our starter...is probably around 70 years old," said Riley. "Sourdough has always been the big, staple product, and that still is our bestseller."

Bosket Bread's long-lasting success can likely be attributed to the brothers' commitment to simple, quality ingredients — creating bread that not only tastes good, but feels good.

"It is just as simple as possible. The sourdough is literally olive oil, bread flour, water, salt and starter," said Riley.

Bosket Bread doesn't use any preservatives or additives, he noted. Instead, it leverages its location, making fresh, frequent deliveries to local buyers.

While Bosket has found its niche among the restaurants, it's also created a name for

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itself at local grocery stores, such as Dan's Food Market and Sage Mountain Natural Foods. According to Spencer, it's especially popular among the younger generations. Spencer said he knows families who bring several loaves of Bosket Bread on vacation because their children refuse to eat any other bread.

"Kids know the difference. They grow up eating this stuff...It's the same with me and Riley too. We always just grew up with our dad's bread, and just the difference between that store-bought, it's so obvious," said Spencer. ■

Taylor Caldwell: 509-433-7276 or taylor@ward.media



Feature

The Taste of Fall

Local chefs turn North Central Washington's autumn harvest into creative, comforting menus.

When summer begins to loosen its grip on North Central Washington, the region's kitchens come alive with a different kind of abundance. Orchards fill with apples and pears, farmers bring in squash and root vegetables, and the forests offer wild mushrooms. For local chefs, fall is an opportunity to turn that harvest into something both familiar and unexpected.

For Chef Ben Herreid, owner and executive chef of Larch Restaurant Group in Leavenworth, the season is defined by abundance.

"Fall means abundance for me," he said. "In the fall that's when everything's available. You wait and wait, and suddenly it's like it's coming out of your ears."

Herreid oversees three Leavenworth restaurants — Prusik, Larch and Carta — each with its own personality but a shared emphasis on thoughtful cooking and regional ingredients. At Carta, that philosophy is taking an especially Pacific Northwest-focused direction, with menus inspired by the ocean, forest and field.

For Chef Top Rojanasthien, who owns and operates Atlas Fare in Wenatchee with his wife, Jenny, fall is about a different kind of abundance: the comfort of gathering around a table.

"For me, fall cooking is about family and friends," he said. "Warm feelings, warm atmosphere, warm spices, just dining in comfort."

Though their restaurants and culinary styles differ, both chefs approach the season

Photo Courtesy of Larch Restaurant Group
Carta introduces diners to a six-course experience built around a choice of three Pacific Northwest-inspired routes: Ocean, Forest or Field.

with the same basic idea: Let the ingredients lead, then find creative ways to make them shine.

A Taste of Place

Ask Herreid which ingredient tells him fall has arrived, and his answer comes from the forest.

"One thing that comes to mind immediately is chanterelles," he said. "We're in the Pacific Northwest and we do a lot with foraging. Right now we're just entering that season where chanterelles are going to come on board, and that's going to be huge."

For Herreid, chanterelles offer more than a seasonal flavor. They tell a story about where his restaurants are located.

"I feel like they're unique to our region, and they're abundant in our region," he said. "They really showcase a flavor that is uniquely Pacific Northwest, and even more specifically the Cascade Mountains."

That sense of place is important to

Herreid, particularly in a destination such as Leavenworth, where visitors arrive from around the state and beyond.

"People travel here from all over the state, and they want to try something that really expresses who we are," he said. "I think chanterelles hit it on the head."

In Wenatchee, Rojanasthien looks to the orchards for his strongest connection to fall.

"We live in one of the best apple-growing regions in the world — which is why featuring the Cosmic Crisp apple was a no-brainer for us," he said.

The Cosmic Crisp makes appearances at Atlas Fare in both sweet and savory dishes, including Apple Pie Bread Pudding and the Jenny Salad.

Photo Courtesy of Atlas Fare
Pistachio-crusted pork tenderloin is paired with a creamy mustard sauce, bringing together rich, savory flavors and a hint of autumn warmth.



By Quinn Propst
Ward Media Staff Reporter



Feature

"It has that great balance of sweetness, acidity and crunch that makes it versatile in both sweet and savory applications," Rojanasthien said.

Pears, carrots, parsnips and autumn squash also find their way onto his menus, offering the ingredients for dishes that feel distinctly suited to cooler weather.

Beyond the Butternut

For Herreid, fall's ingredients become most interesting when chefs move beyond the familiar.

"There are so many varieties," he said. "Everyone knows their butternut and everyone knows their zucchini. But I'm really excited thinking about things like red kuri squash."

His relationships with local farmers make it possible to experiment with varieties that diners may not encounter every day.

"I have a local farmer that will grow several hundred pounds for me now," he said. "And Jarrahdale, which is an Australian variety he's been growing for me—it's almost like a huge, Cinderella-style looking pumpkin."

Rather than simply roasting the squash and putting it on a plate, Herreid's kitchen has

been exploring more elaborate preparations. One recent example is arancini made with Jarrahdale pumpkin risotto and Caciocavallo cheese.

"We've been doing really fun preparations with some of the more unique squash," he said. "I feel like people need to venture out and try these other squashes because the preparations aren't any different than your other squash, but the flavors are all unique. Maybe you'll find something you like even better than butternut."

At Atlas Fare, Rojanasthien takes a similar approach to balancing familiar ingredients with new flavors. The restaurant's fall cooking incorporates the chefs' love of travel and global cuisine into dishes designed to remain approachable.

"Following the concept of Atlas Fare, we try to incorporate our love of travel and global flavors into familiar dishes," he said. "It is no different with our Fall dishes."

Ingredients such as miso, mustards and spices add depth to comforting dishes without overwhelming the ingredients themselves.

"Incorporating ingredients such as miso, mustards, and spices add



Photo Courtesy of Larch Restaurant Groupe

Slow-braised Snake River Farms pork shank rubbed with chipotle morita is served over creamy Asiago polenta with roasted black grape mostarda, seasonal vegetables and saba.

umami notes that enhance our comfort dishes," he said.

Comfort With a Creative Edge

Fall menus have a natural advantage: People are ready for food that feels warm, hearty and familiar. But neither chef sees comfort as a reason to stop experimenting.

At Atlas Fare, two newer dishes — Pork Tenderloin and Roasted Carrots — lean into the flavors and colors of the season.

"The dishes are inspired by the comforting tastes of slow cooking and warm spices," Rojanasthien said. "In addition, the dishes visually express the beautiful earthy colors of Autumn."

His curry squash soup has also quickly become a guest favorite, while Washington- and Oregon-sourced wagyu braised beef and steaks add locally raised meat to the menu.

At Carta, Herreid is looking toward roasted meats and game



Photo Courtesy of Atlas Fare

Roasted carrots are served with mint yogurt, feta, hot honey, pistachio and miso, while a seared scallop is paired with miso butter and cauliflower purée.



Photo Courtesy of Atlas Fare

Atlas Fare's Apple Pie Bread Pudding combines apple-spiced custard with bourbon caramel sauce for a comforting take on a classic fall dessert.

as temperatures drop. Oregon rabbit is among the ingredients he is excited to work with, while a porchetta made with Carleton Farms pork is being developed with hazelnuts and porcini pappardelle.

"I feel like that's going to be a super solid fall dish," he said. "All the flavors seem like they're going to be solid for the end of summer into fall."

Apples also provide a natural bridge between the season's sweetness and its savory flavors. Herreid is planning an apple tarte Tatin served with a Beecher's cheese cookie and ice cream.

Raising a Glass

Wine is another part of the autumn experience, and both restaurants approach pairings as an opportunity to broaden the meal.

At Carta, Herreid relies on his sommelier and manager, Genevieve Helligso, to develop pairings that complement the restaurant's regional focus.



Photo Courtesy of Atlas Fare

Chef Top Rojanasthien, executive chef and owner of Atlas Fare, draws on seasonal ingredients and global flavors to create dishes inspired by the comfort and abundance of fall.

"I go to Genevieve," he said. "She's our sommelier and manager, and she is just phenomenal with wine. I lean into her for those."

For the current Carta menu, the goal is to keep the wine list close to home.

"The current menu we're doing for Carta is going to be specifically targeted Pacific Northwest," Herreid said. "That was one of her deals—that she only feature local wineries on that menu."

At Atlas Fare, Rojanasthien takes a broader approach, reflecting the restaurant's international influences. Guests can choose from old-world and international wines, as well as Washington selections.

"With wine, it's all about personal preference, and there are no wrong answers," he said.

The goal is to understand what guests enjoy and help them find a pairing that works for them, whether that means a Spanish tempranillo, French champagne or a Washington red blend.

Bringing People to the Table

Ultimately, neither chef is simply trying to showcase a particular squash, mushroom, apple or cut of meat. The ingredients are a means of creating an experience.

Rojanasthien hopes his fall dishes bring guests back to the simple pleasure of eating together.

"Firstly, we hope they enjoy the flavors and feel like they made a great choice," he said. "Secondly, we hope the dishes evoke a sense of comfort that they may feel enjoying a meal at their own home with friends and family."

Thanksgiving, his favorite holiday, captures that idea.

"The idea of sharing a decadent meal with family

and friends in a comfortable atmosphere will always inspire how we cook and serve our meals," he said.

Herreid hopes for something similar, while also encouraging diners to slow down enough to let food create memories.

"I'm hoping people come here and slow down," he said. "I feel like we live so much in the digital and AI and all of these influences happening in our lives, and I really want people to be able to slow down and have an experience."

He has seen firsthand how powerfully a dish can connect someone to a memory. A guest once became emotional after eating one of his roasted mushroom dishes because it reminded her of foraging with her father, who had died the year before.

"That's the kind of connection food can sometimes have if we slow down and enjoy it and get out of the rat race," he said. "We want people to experience that. To take them to another place—a good place."

That may be the real taste of fall in North Central Washington: not simply the familiar flavors of apples, squash, mushrooms and warm spices, but the opportunity to gather around a table and experience them in new ways. ■



Photo Courtesy of Larch Restaurant Group

Executive Chef Ryan works alongside Chef Ben Herreid to test, refine and perfect the dishes featured on Carta's seasonal tasting menu.





Building North Central Washington (Building NCW), is a nonprofit organization bringing together the builders, tradespeople, designers, suppliers, lenders, and local businesses who help shape the places we call home.

Photo Courtesy of Central Washington Construction



Home is Having a Moment

Fall inspiration, smart updates and a little preparation before winter arrives

There's something about September in North Central Washington that turns our attention back toward home.

The mornings get cooler. The hills begin trading summer green for gold. Evenings on the patio require an extra layer, and suddenly that fireplace we barely noticed all summer starts looking pretty inviting.

Fall has a way of making us look at our homes differently.

And lately, what homeowners want from their spaces is changing too. Less "perfect for the photo" and more comfortable, functional and made for actually living in.

Warm woods, natural stone and richer colors are finding their way back into homes. Lighting is becoming softer and more layered. Kitchens continue to be gathering places, but homeowners are also thinking about how the spaces around them work: mudrooms that can handle real life, flexible rooms that serve more than one purpose and outdoor areas that stretch our relatively short North Central Washington patio season just a little longer.

There's also a growing appreciation for the things you don't necessarily see.

Good insulation. Energy-efficient windows. Thoughtful storage. Quality materials. Heating and cooling systems that keep a home comfortable through 100-degree summer afternoons and snowy January mornings.

Not exactly the glamorous side of home design, but comfort has a funny way of becoming luxurious when winter arrives.

BEFORE THE SNOW FLIES...

Of course, fall isn't only about cozying up the house. September and early fall are also the perfect time to give your home a little attention before North Central Washington's colder weather arrives.

Look up. Check your roof and gutters for damage, loose materials and debris. It's considerably easier to deal with a small problem now than discover it during the first heavy snow.

Seal the gaps. Take a look at weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors. Small drafts can make a surprisingly

big difference in comfort and energy use.

Give your heating system some love.

Change the filter and consider scheduling seasonal maintenance before the first truly cold week, when approximately everyone else remembers they own a furnace too.

Protect the pipes. Disconnect garden hoses, winterize irrigation systems and make sure exposed plumbing is protected from freezing temperatures.

Take a lap around the house. Look at siding, decks, concrete, exterior paint and drainage. Fall is a good time to catch little issues before winter gives them the opportunity to become much more ambitious.

And think ahead. If a remodel, addition, new windows or even a new home is somewhere in your future, fall is a great time to start those conversations. Good projects benefit from planning long before the first hammer swings.

MAKE HOME FEEL GOOD

Your home doesn't need a full renovation to feel different this fall.

Sometimes it's changing the lighting, bringing in warmer textures, rearranging a room or finally fixing that one thing you've walked past for six months while pretending you absolutely do not see it.

Sometimes it's simply making the house ready for the season ahead.

Because a good home isn't necessarily the biggest, newest or most impressive one. It's the place that works for the people inside it, stands up to our four very opinionated North Central Washington seasons and gives us somewhere we genuinely enjoy coming back to.

So light the fireplace. Invite some people over. Put something good on the stove.

Winter will get here soon enough. ■

Building North Central Washington represents local builders, remodelers, trades and home-industry professionals who help build, improve and care for the places we call home throughout North Central Washington.

Fall Home *Tips*

A mix of practical home preparation and simple ideas that make fall at home more comfortable and enjoyable.



- 1. Show the furnace a little love** — Replace the filter and schedule seasonal maintenance before the first cold week—when everyone suddenly remembers furnaces exist.
- 2. Clear the gutters** — Remove leaves and debris before fall rain and winter snow turn a small clog into a much larger personality problem.
- 3. Disconnect the garden hoses** — Drain hoses, cover exterior faucets and winterize irrigation systems before freezing temperatures arrive.
- 4. Find the drafts** — Check weather stripping and caulking around doors and windows. Small gaps can quietly nibble away at comfort and energy costs.
- 5. Look up**—and check the drainage — Check shingles, flashing, vents, nearby tree limbs, downspouts and drainage around the foundation. Use a professional if heights and you are not currently on speaking terms.
- 6. Prepare the fireplace and safety equipment** — Clean and inspect the fireplace or chimney, then test smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms. Cozy season should remain cozy.

- 7. Check outdoor lighting** — Replace bulbs and clean fixtures before shorter days make arriving home feel like an obstacle course.
- 8. Create an entryway landing zone** — Add hooks, baskets or a boot tray for coats, backpacks and wet shoes. The floor has carried this team long enough.
- 9. Warm up the lighting and texture** — Add lamps, warmer bulbs, heavier throws, woven baskets and natural wood. A home can feel like fall without becoming a pumpkin warehouse.
- 10. Make one room gathering-ready** — Rearrange seating, clear the dining table or create a cozy conversation area before the holidays and football gatherings begin. ■

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Feature

Mornings

Begin

At two North Central Washington coffee shops, homemade food, warm drinks and familiar faces turn an everyday stop into a place to belong.

On a crisp fall morning in North Central Washington, the first stop of the day can be about much more than coffee.

It might be the place where a commuter grabs a breakfast burrito before work, where friends settle in for a conversation, or where a regular walks through the door and is greeted by name. It might be a place to work for an hour, catch up with a neighbor or simply watch the world go by with a warm cup in hand.

In Wenatchee and Cashmere, two local coffee shops have found their own ways to become part of that daily rhythm.

At Leandro's Cafe & Bistro, tucked inside Wenatchee's Columbia Station transit hub, the morning brings commuters, students, families and regulars looking for coffee and a homemade breakfast. In Cashmere, Gaucho Coffee Co. has become a gathering place in a character-filled building surrounded by other small businesses.

Neither set out to simply sell coffee. Both have created spaces where people want to stay — and where relationships have become as important as what's in the cup.

A place to begin

For Lorena Sandoval and Jesus Leandro, the path to owning a coffee shop began with a food cart.

The family first served coffee alongside tacos and other food at a Fourth of July



By Quinn Propst
Ward Media Staff Reporter

celebration. From there, they continued catering family parties, community events and weekly gatherings. Eventually, they invested in a dedicated coffee cart with an espresso machine and continued pairing coffee with their popular Mexican dishes.

As the business grew, so did the desire for a permanent home.

That opportunity came in 2024, when the family learned about an available space at Columbia Station.

"We heard about this opportunity from a family member," Sandoval said. "We had to compete with several other restaurants and bakeries to get this place. There were a lot of proposals to write, a lot of things we had to do to qualify. Thankfully, we got it."

The family began selling coffee at events in July 2024 before opening Leandro's Cafe & Bistro at the station in March, 2025.

The location might seem like an unlikely setting for a place designed to linger. Buses and trains are constantly moving outside,



Photo Courtesy of Gaucho Coffee Co.

Customers settle in with their coffee at Gaucho Coffee Co., one of Cashmere's gathering places for regulars, friends and people looking to linger.





and the transit center brings a steady stream of people through the area.

But inside Leandro's, the pace feels different.

Large windows look toward the mountains east of Wenatchee. Customers can watch trains arrive and buses come and go while sitting over a cup of coffee or a meal.

"People really enjoy that they can sit here for a long time," Leandro said.

That invitation to stay has helped create a diverse group of regulars. Children come in for crepes. Couples meet for dates and sometimes spend the entire visit off their phones. Older customers stop in weekly to read, chat or enjoy a familiar order.

In the morning, the rhythm changes again. "From about 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. we are very busy with coffee and burritos," Sandoval said. "People take their coffee and breakfast and leave so happy, saying, 'See you tomorrow.' They tell us this is the best coffee and the best crepes."

The coffee comes from Caffè D'arte, a roaster the family discovered while visiting their children. They liked the flavor and have

continued working with the company.

Even a simple cup of coffee has become part of the shop's reputation.

"People tell us even the regular coffee is the best they've ever had," Sandoval said.

As temperatures drop, Leandro's shifts into another kind of comfort. Beginning in September, homemade soups return to the menu, including clam chowder, broccoli cheddar and tomato basil, often served with grilled cheese.

"People love having clam chowder or broccoli cheddar with grilled cheese," Sandoval said. "It's something they don't always see together, but once they try it, they really enjoy it."



Photo by Andrew Simpson/Ward Media
Crepes are among the specialties at Leandro's Cafe & Bistro, where the family-owned business serves scratch-made food alongside coffee at Wenatchee's Columbia Station.

The seasonal menu adds another reason to linger when the mornings turn cool.

A community takes shape

A few miles away in Cashmere, Liz Follansbee was also looking for a place of her own.

Follansbee had worked in coffee for years and had long dreamed of opening a shop. The opportunity arrived when a former customer from a coffee shop where she had worked on Wenatchee's west side told her about an available space.

Photo by Andrew Simpson/Ward Media
Lorena Sandoval pulls a double shot of espresso at Leandro's Cafe & Bistro, where coffee has been part of the family business since its early days as a catering operation.

"I just went in and saw the space, and I thought it was too cool to pass up," Follansbee said.

That was in early 2024. She spent the summer working on the business plan, pricing and build-out, describing the process as "diving in headfirst."

"It's definitely like a dream come true," she said. "It's been on my radar for a long time."

Gaucha Coffee Co. opened in October 2024.

For Follansbee, the building and its neighbors were part of the appeal. The space is surrounded by other small businesses, many owned by first-time business owners.

"I just love the Cashmere community. Everybody's awesome and kind," she said.

Over time, Gaucha has become one of the places where those connections happen.

"There are a lot of people that come and meet other people here," she said. "We've kind of become a central point."

That sense of connection isn't something Follansbee considers separate from the coffee shop. It is part of what she believes makes Gaucha work.

The same is true at Leandro's, where Sandoval sees the cafe as intertwined with the daily life of Columbia Station. Transit drivers, commuters and other regulars stop in for breakfast and something warm to drink before work or between routes.

"I love when people come and say they're here to support a small business," Sandoval said. "We belong to them, because that's how we can succeed—with their support."



Feature

More than what's in the cup

Both shops put plenty of thought into what they serve, but neither defines the experience by coffee alone.

At Gaucho, Follansbee makes the shop's syrups in-house, with a rotating seasonal drink menu that changes throughout the year.

Some drinks are inspired by trends; others come from ideas developed by the staff.

The pastry case features goods from local baker Hannah's Pantry, while the shop has also expanded its own food production.

"We just started doing all our food in a commercial kitchen," Follansbee said. "We're trying to provide things that are healthy and good and different and unique."

That includes breakfast burritos and sandwiches, a menu Follansbee had wanted to create for some time.

"I'm really excited about it, and I'm proud of it," she said.

At Leandro's, the same attention to the food extends far beyond the coffee bar.

"Everything is fresh," Leandro said. "Our triple aioli, our Caesar dressing, the soups—the tomato basil, the clam chowder, the broccoli cheddar—all of that is made from scratch. The burritos are made from scratch.



Photo by Andrew Simpson/Ward Media
Leandro's Cafe & Bistro co-owner Lorena Sandoval showcases one of the cafe's berry crepes, a popular choice among morning customers.



We're very picky about our vegetables, our meat, everything we use."

All of the coffee syrups are also made in house at Leandro's. That commitment to making food by hand is part of what Sandoval hopes customers notice.

"They tell us we are very friendly, and they feel at home here," she said. "All the flavors in each item, plus how we treat them, together it makes them very happy."

The feeling of fall

Perhaps no season makes the role of a neighborhood coffee shop more apparent than fall.

At Gaucho, Follansbee loves the contrast between the weather outside and the atmosphere inside.

"I love the coziness of it, when it's that crisp air outside and it's warm inside," she said.

The shop brings back its homemade pumpkin sauce each fall, along with other seasonal drinks and food.

"We always do a homemade pumpkin sauce in the fall among our other seasonal drinks," she said.

Fall also carries a personal significance for Follansbee. Gaucho opened in October 2024,

so the season brings back memories of the shop's first days.

"We opened in October of 2024, so for me it's nostalgic," she said. "It feels like, 'Oh yeah, this was the time, this is what it felt like when we opened.'"

At Leandro's, fall means homemade soup, grilled cheese and the return of meals meant to warm people from the inside out.

But the season also highlights something deeper about both businesses: People aren't simply looking for caffeine. They're looking for somewhere to be.

At Gaucho, Follansbee describes the atmosphere as "funky, eclectic, but calm." The lighting, music and layout were deliberately designed to make the space comfortable for customers who want to work, while still maintaining enough energy to feel alive.

"There's a lot of thought that went into everything—from being able to have people work from the coffee shop to the lighting to the music," she said. "We're trying to create a good ambiance."

At Leandro's, the views, the movement outside the windows and the unhurried atmosphere create a different kind of setting.

Both, however, are built around the same basic idea: Make people comfortable enough that they want to come back.

The people behind the regulars

For Follansbee, the best part of owning a coffee shop may be what happens after customers stop being customers and become familiar faces.

"You get to know people's families and their stories," she said.

She has watched relationships unfold across the counter, including one couple who went from dating to engaged to married while they were regulars at Gaucho.

"We got to be part of that whole process, which just feels really special," she said.

The connection works in both directions. Regulars notice when their baristas are having a difficult day.

"They're the people who, when they can look at you and say, 'Oh, you seem off today,' that kind of role reversal feels like humanity at its finest," she said. "It's so genuine."

She has watched customers celebrate milestones together, too, including a pregnant



Photo Courtesy of Gaucho Coffee Co.
A Gaucho Coffee Co. barista prepares drinks behind the counter at the Cashmere coffee shop, where housemade syrups and seasonal offerings are part of the experience.

regular who was showered with baby gifts by fellow customers.

"We just have such an awesome group of regulars," she said. "Everybody's just... it's really cool."

At Leandro's, the family has seen its own version of that loyalty. Customers from near and far have told Sandoval they are already planning return trips to Wenatchee because of the food, coffee and hospitality. For her, that response is the ultimate compliment.

Where mornings begin

A great coffee shop can be measured in cups sold, meals served or the quality of its espresso. But those numbers don't fully explain why people return.

It is the regular who knows exactly what they want. The commuter who has five minutes to grab breakfast. The friend who comes for coffee but stays for an hour. The couple who puts their phones away. The person working quietly in the corner. The barista who knows when something isn't

quite right. Those small interactions are what turn a business into a gathering place.

Follansbee hopes everyone who walks into Gaucho feels that sense of belonging.

"I want them to feel welcomed and like everybody belongs there," she said.

And when they leave, she hopes they remember more than the drink.

"First and foremost, I hope they remember that they had a really good cup of coffee," she said. "But also that they felt welcomed, that they enjoyed the visuals and ambiance of the space, and that the whole experience was just nice and easy."

At Leandro's, Sandoval hopes customers leave with a similar feeling of warmth and home.

In the end, perhaps that's what makes a coffee shop part of a town. Not simply the coffee, the food or the décor, but the feeling that on a chilly fall morning, there is a place where someone will know you, welcome you and have a warm cup waiting.

For some, that's where the day begins. ■



Photo by Andrew Simpson/Ward Media
Leandro's Café & Bistr owners Lorena Sandoval and Jesus Leandro built their business around coffee, scratch-made food and creating a welcoming gathering place in Wenatchee.

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Where the river meets

Home



Photo by Mike Irwin

The galley kitchen, open to the dining area (with its three-sided views) and the living room, features an array of top-quality appliances, quartzite countertops, white oak cabinetry and a walk-in pantry.

Van Lith Homes brings understated luxury, thoughtful design and a distinctly local touch to a new riverside retreat near Leavenworth.

By Susan Lagsdin
Good Life Contributor

With its lawn reaching down to a wide swath of Wenatchee River beachfront, this one-level, 4,387 square-foot home is the first of potentially nine in Van Lith Homes' Stillwater Estates in Peshastin. Just a few minutes from Leavenworth, it's sited carefully on a little over two acres to maximize private views of the river and the cliffs.

The couple that created Van Lith Homes knows from long experience that the right buyer, whether using it for vacations or full-time living, will make this their dream home.

Corey and Jessica Van Lith are a quintessential locally grown success story. They met doing Eastmont High School sports, married and raised their kids here — daughter

Hailey plays in the WNBA, son Tyler works for Oracle. After college, Corey bought into, then branched out from his father Gary's excavation business.

For the past 25 years, from excavation to construction to interior design, as Van Lith Homes they've focused their talents on building houses. How many? With a few townhomes and condos factored in, Corey says it's 125.

Corey did his years of boots-on-the-ground work at the launch of the business but says that these days his main job is managing. Everything. "That's projects, schedules, people, quality control—I'm on at least one site every day."

Home construction is an intensely collaborative enterprise, and that means a lot of face-to-face time. Corey works with Monaco Designs, the company's primary architect, and with Rachel Goetz of Laura



Photo provided

Situated away from Highway 2 and close to the Wenatchee River, this Peshastin home is the first in Stillwater Estates to be completed. Eight nearby building lots, some still available, share similar amenities.



Photo by Mike Irwin

Jessica and Corey, owners of Van Lith Homes, are joined in the home's kitchen by realtor Rachel Goetz, who markets their luxury lots and houses. The three have worked together since 2008.



Photo by Mike Irwin

Swimming, sunning, fishing, kayaking and all-around "having a good time at the river" is built into the site plan, with a separate easement to their beach for each homeowner in the Stillwater community.

Feature

Mounter Real Estate, who's been his go-to realtor for years.

Corey said he's pleased to maintain good relationships with city and county officials, with the work crews, with the plumbing and electrical subcontractors who've been with the company for 25 years, and with other local vendors. "Hey, this is a small community," he said. "You've got to stay honest and take care of each other."

Thirty percent of his business is in "spec" homes (like this one) to be sold on completion. But the majority is in building custom homes, where Corey works personally with clients through the whole process. He said most rewarding moments of his job involve pleasing those individuals. "There's that first moment when I show them around the completed house. Or even earlier, when I share a vision that seems to match the clients' and they get really excited."

Corey and Jessica, whose good design eye forms the essential look and feel of the homes' interiors, agreed that communication is vital in every step of a project. Too much buyer input at the wrong times, like after installation, can slow a project and lead to cost overruns. "But it's rare that we get too little feedback from our clients," Jessica said. "Even if they're hands off on the details, as in 'you make the choices' we give them options at every step, from room size to flooring to drawer pulls."

Corey agreed. "People who choose us have done their homework. They're generally pretty savvy about the process, and they have strong opinions. And we want to give them the home they envisioned." A few past homebuyers have come back after years for a remodel. And, notably, five others have asked Van Lith Homes to build their newest best place.

This first completed house at Stillwater Estates will become the home of someone who appreciates and can invest in quality. But it will also show purchasers of nearby lots how a careful building plan can maximize their home's functionality and pleasure.

The entrance to this house was designed for drama. The 4.5-foot-wide steel front door pivots on its axis, and straight across the wide expanse of pale oak flooring a 21-foot wall of telescoping glass doors opens to the covered patio and views of the distant eastern hills.

To the left is a fireplace wall backed by a wide corridor linking the super-sized primary suite with a guest-and-family-friendly cluster of three bedroom/bath combos and a common area. Each of the four sleeping rooms has a custom closet, each spacious bathroom is tiled in porcelain.

To the right of the entrance is the sunny kitchen and dining section fronting a thoughtfully designed trove of rooms: a pantry, two "flex spaces" (for studio, collections, office, crafts, music, pets?), a laundry room and a half-bath. For the owners' good health, sauna and hot/cool tub prep are provided outside, but this wing also holds a full-sized exercise room. They're all easily reached from the 3-vehicle garage, its farthest bay tall enough for a boat or RV.

Though tastes and the economy change over time, Corey and Jessica stay aware of buyers' desires (like smart tech, functional rooms, continued fitness), and they learned to flex with downturns. "In 2008, new home construction slowed way down," said Corey, "So we worked on remodels, smaller homes, lots of excavation and site preparation—and we made it back by 2015."

Then Covid taught people how to work from home, urban stressors grew, retirees realized their equity, and Washington's tech industry boomed – all good indicators for a luxury home builder in an attractive rural region. This home, listed at \$2.6 million, has shown well in its first months on the market.

Rachel, in the business for 20 years, knows local real estate well. "People buying a home like this one at Stillwater have basic requirements," she said. "Whether it's for recreation or for simply cerebral enjoyment, they want a beautiful outdoor setting like water, mountains or desert that's not too removed from a town or city. They want privacy. And for the price they pay, they expect the best upgraded products and finishes — plus a few unique, special features."

The Van Liths are proud to provide those necessities for their next buyer. The Stillwater house doesn't shout quality; it whispers, Jessica said, summing up what she sees as its appeal: "When you walk in the door, you should simply have the feel of a comfortable, luxurious retreat." ■



Photo by Mike Irwin
Seen here through the fitness room windows, the front patio is deliberately shaded from western sun and offers one of six discreet outdoor spaces designed for private relaxation or entertaining guests.

Photo by Mike Irwin
The open living area offers options for furniture groupings, art display and orientation to the river. Behind the fireplace, to the left are three en suite rooms; to the right, down a wide hall, is the primary suite.



Feature Beyond the Orchard

Photos By Andrew Simpson/Ward Media



For generations, tree fruit has been more than a crop in North Central Washington. It has shaped the region's landscape, workforce, businesses and even its sense of place.

You don't have to see an orchard to know you're in fruit country. It is written on warehouse walls and packing sheds, on roadside signs and the names of businesses. It is sliced into bags, pressed into juice, cooked into candy and loaded by the truckload for markets hundreds or thousands of miles away.

And, of course, it still hangs from the trees.

For generations, fruit has shaped North Central Washington in ways that extend far beyond the orchard rows themselves. Apples became the region's most recognizable symbol, but pears, cherries, apricots and other tree fruit helped build the same economy and culture, supporting generations of growers, workers, packers, processors and businesses.

Somewhere along the way, fruit stopped being simply something the region grew.

It became something the region was.

Growing an identity

Apples themselves are immigrants to the American story. Native crabapple species grew in North America, but the familiar domestic apple arrived with Europeans. By the early 1600s, English settlers were planting imported trees and seeds in New England, beginning an expansion that would eventually carry cultivated apples across the continent.



By Andrew Simpson
Ward Media Staff Reporter

While some pear orchards remain in Wenatchee proper, most of the pears in the valley come from Peshastin and places up the valley, like this orchard on the North Road heading toward Leavenworth.

They reached what would become Washington much later. Apples were planted at Fort Vancouver in the 1820s, but for decades they remained primarily a local crop. The transformation into a commercial industry required something Central Washington conspicuously lacked: water.

The same dry climate that made large-scale agriculture difficult also offered advantages for tree fruit. Sunshine was plentiful, summers were warm and relatively low humidity reduced some of the disease pressures growers encountered elsewhere. Snow piled up in the Cascades every winter, providing a source of water if people could figure out how to move it where they wanted it.

And boy, did they.

Small irrigation ditches preceded increasingly ambitious canal systems. Around Wenatchee, commercial orchards began appearing in the 1880s. The Peshastin Ditch began opening land farther up the Wenatchee Valley, while larger projects followed. In the early 1900s, the Wenatchee Development Company, under the direction of engineer W.T. Clark, completed a roughly

16-mile gravity-flow canal capable of irrigating thousands of acres.

A bridge named for Clark still spans the Columbia River in Wenatchee, carrying a 4-foot pipe that delivers 24,000 gallons a minute of irrigation water to Douglas County.

Water made the orchards possible. Transportation made them an industry.

Rail service gave growers access to distant markets just as irrigated acreage was expanding. Fruit no longer had to be consumed, preserved or sold close to where it was grown. Apples and pears could leave the valley by the railcar.

The combination was transformative.

By the early 20th century, boosters were selling the Wenatchee Valley as a place "where dollars grow on trees." Michael Horan, one of the valley's prominent early orchardists, took nine varieties of apples to the National Apple Show in Spokane in 1908 and came home crowned the National Apple King.

The reputation stuck.

Wenatchee became the self-proclaimed "Apple Capital of the World," and Washington became the nation's leading apple-producing state by the 1920s.

But the orchards spreading through the valleys were never exclusively apple orchards.

More than apples

Drive through the Wenatchee Valley around harvest and the distinction is difficult to miss.

Pear trees, often broader and more irregular than the tightly managed rows associated with modern apple production, remain a defining part of the landscape around Cashmere, Dryden, Peshastin and the surrounding hillsides. Cherries thrive elsewhere across North Central Washington, while apricots, peaches and other tree fruits have long contributed to the region's agricultural mix.

Each crop brought its own season, risks and markets. Together, they helped create something larger: an economy organized around trees.

Growing the fruit was only the beginning.

It had to be picked, sorted, packed, stored, processed, sold and shipped. Warehouses rose near railroad lines and highways. Box manufacturers supplied growers and packers. Cold storage extended the selling season. Advances in controlled-atmosphere storage eventually allowed fruit harvested in fall to reach consumers months later while retaining much of its fresh-picked quality.

Over time, names including Stemilt and Tree Top became familiar far beyond North Central Washington. Crunch Pak built a business around an even more specific proposition: take an apple, slice it and make fresh fruit convenient enough to compete with packaged snacks.

Although you can find Crunch Pak nationwide in grocery stores — it is the largest producer of sliced apples in the United States — its headquarters are still right in the heart of old town Cashmere.

Each represents another step away from the tree itself, but none exists without it.

The industry also required something no irrigation ditch, railroad or refrigerated warehouse could provide. People.

Following the fruit

Tree fruit has always demanded enormous amounts of labor concentrated into relatively short periods.

When orchards were small, families could often handle much of their own harvest. As acreage expanded, that became impossible. By the 1930s, the Wenatchee Valley needed an estimated 10,000 additional workers



A semi trailer waits on a weekday morning to load up with Crunch Pak sliced apple containers for shipping across the United States.



Pears, not quite ripe as this photo was taken, have grown alongside the Wenatchee Valley's apples for nearly as long as the region has been irrigated.

during harvest.

Who performed that work changed repeatedly.

Local residents worked the early orchards alongside migrant laborers of European ancestry. Native American, Chinese and Japanese workers were also part of the early agricultural workforce. Filipino and Mexican workers became increasingly important during labor shortages surrounding World War I.

Then the Depression and Dust Bowl put hundreds of thousands of Americans on the road.

Families from Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and other parts of the Plains and South followed agricultural seasons west, some eventually joining the fruit runs that carried workers north through California, Oregon and Washington. Cherries ripened first. Pears followed. Apples could keep a picker working into fall.

Some kept moving. Some stayed.

Later, Mexican and Mexican American families became increasingly central to

Washington agriculture. Mexican workers arrived through the federal Bracero Program during and after World War II, and Latino workers continued to reshape the industry after the program ended in 1964.

Today, the Hispanic and Latino communities of North Central Washington are inseparable from the story of tree fruit, just as earlier waves of workers became part of the communities built around the orchards.

The trees did more than produce fruit. They moved people.

And people who came for the fruit built lives, families, businesses and communities that remained long after a particular harvest ended.

When a crop becomes a place

Perhaps nowhere is the transformation from agricultural product to community identity more visible than Cashmere.

In 1915, Armenian immigrants Armen Tertsagian and Mark Balaban arrived in the community and bought an apple orchard. They called it Liberty Orchards.

During a tour of the Aplets & Cotlets factory, you can sample not just the mainstay candies, but the rest of the products made by Liberty Orchards, all while watching the production process.

Like generations of fruit growers before and after them, they faced a basic agricultural problem: what to do with fruit that could not be sold fresh.

They experimented with dehydration, preserves and other forms of processing. Drawing on a confection they remembered from their childhoods, they eventually turned local apples, and later apricots, into something entirely different.

Aplets & Cotlets became one of Washington's most recognizable regional candies and, like the fresh fruit packaged directly across the street at Crunch Pak, are now also sold nationwide.

The product survived long after the original orchard ceased being the center of the business. Boxes traveled around the country. Tourists stopped at the Cashmere factory. A candy born partly from the problem of surplus fruit became so closely identified with its hometown that eventually the connection became part of the map.

In the late 1990s, as Cashmere sought to keep Liberty Orchards from relocating, city leaders renamed roads for its signature products. Today, the two main roads into and out of town carry the names Aplets Way and Cotlets Way.

It is difficult to imagine a more permanent expression of what fruit came to mean here. An agricultural product became a confection. The confection became a local institution.

Eventually, the institution became the directions home.

Beyond the orchard

The landscape that created that identity continues to change.

Orchards have disappeared beneath homes and commercial development. Varieties that once dominated packing lines have surrendered acreage to newer ones. Growers have adopted denser plantings, new irrigation systems, mechanization and increasingly sophisticated technology.



Orchardist and cidemaker Sarah Lindell can give almost human characteristics to each of her cider varieties available at Watercore Cider.

Packing houses bear little resemblance to their predecessors of a century ago.

As little as 30 years ago, the Cashmere Fruit Exchange, then situated on the same city block as Aplets & Cotlets and Crunch Pak, was still using wooden rollers to send boxes along the production line from sorting to sizing to shipping.

But change has also created new ways to use the fruit, sometimes by finding value in qualities the commercial fresh-fruit industry might reject.

Watercore Cider owner Sarah Lindell

different apples, blends and micro-batches while its downtown Wenatchee taproom puts the finished product only a few miles from the orchards that supplied it.

"We find the most interesting part of producing cider is discovering how the different varieties impact flavor and how blending different varieties brings out different aspects of the apple flavor," Lindell said.

Even the company's name comes directly from the growing conditions of the Wenatchee Valley.

Watercore is a condition that can create translucent, water-soaked areas inside an apple as sugars accumulate in the fruit. It can make an apple unsuitable for the commercial fresh market. For Lindell, however, some of what makes watercore undesirable in a packing box makes it useful in a cider press.

"We have built our name, Watercore Cider, around the idea that Wenatchee apples are unique because of the growing conditions in the region," Lindell said. "Watercore is a condition that creates additional non fermentable sugar in the apple, and occurs in tree ripened apples when the nights are cold and the days are warm, a quintessential fall day for Wenatchee."

Those sugars allow Watercore to make a dry cider that still retains a hint of sweetness, Lindell said. Producing it requires more than simply finding an apple susceptible to watercore.

"This type of cider can only be produced when you have the right climate, a variety that is susceptible to watercore, and growers who wait to pick until the fruit is fully ripe," she said.

For a business built around expressing the characteristics of local fruit, downtown

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Tree Top has become synonymous with apple juice, but fruit snacks, candies, applesauces and all other sorts of products come out with this familiar logo on them.

sources apples from her family's orchard and other small growers in the region, particularly growers producing small quantities of unusual varieties. Working on a small scale gives Watercore room to experiment with



When Stemilt calls their fruit “world famous,” they mean that they ship to 26 different countries around the globe, from right here on Highway 97A at the north end of Wenatchee.

Wenatchee is an appropriate place to pour the result. Lindell said some customers arrive already attached to particular apple varieties and are eager to taste ciders made from them. Others have little experience with cider at all.

“We also have people who come in who have never tried

cider and are very excited to discover a product so appropriate for a community with an apple growing legacy,” Lindell said.

Watercore has intentionally remained small, giving Lindell the ability to experiment with micro-batches and different varieties while maintaining control

over flavor and quality. The philosophy, she said, is “to let the native flavor of the apple shine through in the finished cider.”

The product may be new. The relationship between the product and the place that created it is not.

The work in the orchards has changed, too, although the fundamental rhythm remains recognizable: pruning and thinning, irrigating and protecting the crop, watching the weather, then bringing in enormous quantities of perishable fruit when the calendar and the trees say it is time.

And the economic footprint reaches well beyond the people who own orchards or pick fruit.

It reaches the warehouses along the highway, the trucks pulling away from loading docks and the scientists studying tree fruit in Wenatchee. It reaches processors turning crops into juice, ingredients, snacks, sweets and cider. It reaches businesses built to supply growers and communities populated in part by generations of people who arrived because there was work in the trees.

The region itself has diversified. Technology, tourism, health care, hydropower and other industries occupy increasingly large places in an economy once overwhelmingly associated with agriculture.

Still, fruit is difficult to escape.

It is in the names, the buildings and the celebrations. It is in century-old trees standing beside modern high-density orchards. It is in families whose grandparents planted the trees and families whose grandparents came to pick them. It is in an old candy company whose products became street names and a new cidery whose name comes from what happens inside an apple on a cold fall night.

And every year, as summer begins to give way to fall, it is there again on branches bending toward the ground.

You don’t have to see an orchard to know you’re in fruit country.

After more than a century, fruit country is no longer only where the trees are. ■

Andrew Simpson: 509-433-7626 or andrew@ward.media



The humble apple is the staple crop of Central Washington, and the fruit around which the Wenatchee Valley created its identity.

Feature

- People often look for parks with drivable scenic attractions, but this Park is more suited for those who love the rugged backcountry terrain.
- Limited accommodations (for sleeping and eating) are a hindrance for some travelers.

In June of this year our family had the opportunity to enjoy three days and nights at the Ross Lake Resort. The Resort opened in 1952, twenty years before Highway 20 was completed! Its remote location is still out of reach for internet service today, and there is no road access to the Resort. It is possible to hike in from the Ross Lake Dam trailhead on Highway 20. However, we chose the easier (but still complicated) way. After all, the journey to get there is what preserves and protects this special place. We left our car at

the overnight Resort parking at Diablo Lake, loaded up all our food and personal items, and took the 30-minute Diablo Lake Seattle City Light Passenger Ferry up to the end of the lake. We then unloaded our gear (and ourselves) from the ferry onto the open-air, heavy-duty truck provided by the Resort. We then rode up to Ross Lake on a steep backroad (about a 400-foot elevation gain). Finally, we and all our gear, were efficiently picked up by a speed boat from the Resort, right across the lake, for a quick ride to our destination where we were unloaded right at the door of our floating cabin!

All of us immediately had a sense of well-being and connection to this unique setting. For me, everything I looked at had a picturesque backdrop behind it: the pristine

wilderness, the scenic beauty of impressive, snow-capped mountains, the lush evergreen forests of Douglas firs, hemlocks, and cedars, and the reflections on the lake with lighting that changed by the minute. All of this contributed to the breath-taking natural wonders to be discovered. Embracing the sense of place here brought me relaxation and peace of mind.

The Resort is open mid-June through October, using a lottery list since it is such a popular destination. Some guests who have come summer after summer, have standing reservations. There is an interesting legacy display of pictures and quotations to memorialize generations of family gatherings at Ross Lake Resort. The cabins are comfortably furnished, including kitchens, bathrooms, electricity, and water. Bedding and cooking essentials are provided. (along with an outdoor gas grill). There are endless opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hiking, wildlife viewing, bird watching, swimming, boating, and fishing. The Resort rents canoes, kayaks, paddle boards, and motorboats. They do warn you that high winds are frequent on the lake, especially in the afternoons.

My daughter and I rented a canoe and started out late in the morning, paddling out on the tranquil lake water. However, we ended up with a strong headwind on our way back

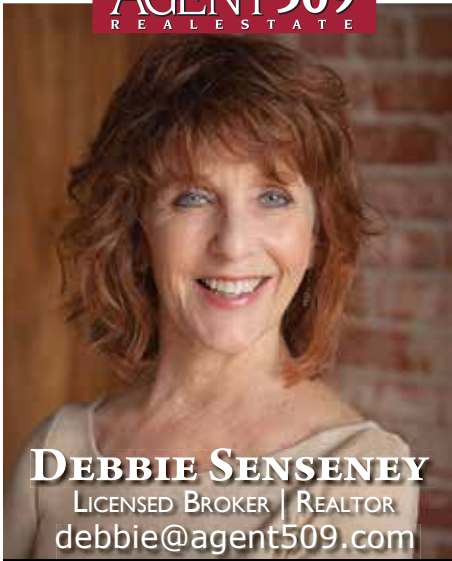


Green Point lookout rewards hikers with a different perspective of Ross Lake. Most hiking trails in the North Cascades are full of ups and downs. This trail, starting from the Resort, leveled off after a short, rocky uphill climb.



Seattle City Light operates the Diablo Lake Passenger Ferry. It is the first mode of transportation to Ross Lake Resort unless you are hiking in.

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An early June sunrise with red hues lighting up Colonial Peak.

that tested our strength and skill. After dinner, when the wind calmed down, we took an evening paddle across the lake to get up close to the waterfall we had been looking at from a distance. I don't think we had been in a canoe together since her Girl Scout days. The adventure on the lake was worth every stroke of the paddle.

We were blessed with three days of perfect weather, which is unusual in June. We noticed other families were doing what we were doing: watching the sunrise, and the sunset, the clouds moving across the sky, and stargazing.

We also noticed people sitting on their decks reading actual, printed books, having quiet conversations, and just being present with the sacred beauty surrounding us all. The relativity of time slowed down, and that seemed to have a calming influence on everyone. My daughter compared it to how she feels when she is sitting on an ocean beach watching the tide come in or go out. I highly recommend this restorative, remote (but reachable) wilderness experience. It is a place to go to exhale stress and inhale peace and quiet; a place to recapture "the good life." ■



A calm beginning for a mother-daughter canoe ride turned into a challenge on our return paddle adventure.



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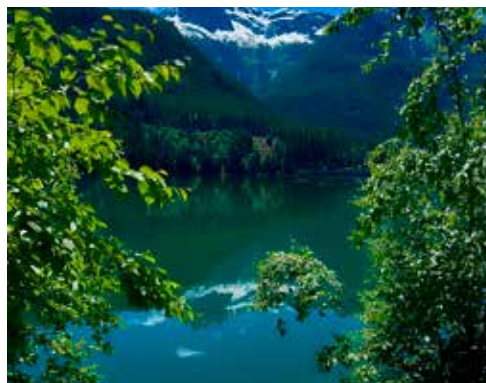


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Ken and Linda are waiting for the Diablo Lake Ferry to pick up passengers on their journey to the end of the Lake, near Ross Dam. The boat ride offers scenic beauty every moment of the half-hour voyage.



Diablo Lake is well-known for its scenic beauty, its family-friendly hiking trails (Thunder Knob and Thunder Creek), the overlook from Highway 20, and the popular campground, Colonial Creek.

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