

# A Feast for White Salmon

*Concern for quality local food inspires pair to open market and delicatessen*

By Jeanie Senior

Jenessa VanDeHey and Shawn Simmons believe food should be fresh, local, organic and sustainable.

Concern about the food available for their two children, Oliver, now 9, and Una, now 13, was one of the reasons the couple opened Feast Market & Delicatessen in White Salmon six years ago.

“I was working at farm-to-table places before that even was cool,” Shawn says, referring to the industry trend for restaurants to serve locally sourced food.

The couple started Feast—a grocery and restaurant—in a converted gas station on the north side of East Jewett Boulevard. The business grew every year.

The couple made the decision this spring to move to larger quarters. The former gas station was compact: picnic tables out front but no indoor seating. In August, Feast moved to the other side of the street, into the storefront vacated when Everybody’s Brewing relocated to a new building next door.

The new place boasts a spacious dining room, a full bar, an outdoor deck with a view of Mount Hood, an expanded deli and meat cases, and a larger grocery section.

They closed Feast for all of July to facilitate the move. While they were settling in at the new space, Jenessa and Shawn set a 3:30 p.m. closing. After the third day, they bumped it to 7:30 p.m. It moved to 9:30 p.m. after Labor Day.



Six years ago, Jenessa VanDeHey and Shawn Simmons started their business, providing quality food to the community.

The move boosted the number of Feast employees from nine to 20 as Feast added dinner to its lunch service. The business is open Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Shawn says it has been interesting to watch diners’ growing acknowledgment and desire for the same qualities that prompted him and Jenessa to open Feast: offering food that is sustainable, organic, local.

“It’s changing people’s minds about what food is,” Shawn says.

Healthy and convenient are features of Feast’s expanded offerings. In addition to lunch and dinner, catering service and groceries, customers can stop by after work and pick up dinner to go.

“We try to get local as much as possible,” Shawn says.

They bought produce this summer from local organic gardeners, who brought surplus vegetables and fruit in to sell.

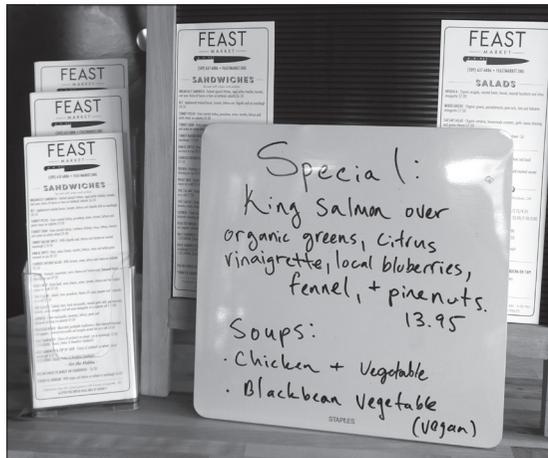
“Sometimes they have a lot, and sometimes we’ve bought as few as three cucumbers,” Shawn says.

The grocery section includes local and regional items: cheese and raw milk from Trout Lake, bread from Blue Sky Bakery and fermented vegetables from Blue Bus. Locally grown organic fruit, berries, salad greens and herbs are featured.

The refrigerator and freezer cases also contain a variety of exotic patés, including pheasant and rosemary paté from Italy, pork and pistachio, and duck liver and cognac. There is prosciutto from Italy and



Organic fruits and vegetables are stocked in front of refrigerated cases of assorted products.



Above, Jenessa prepares to deliver deli sandwiches and chips to customers at Feast. Far left, ET watches over fresh apple pies. Left, fresh, local ingredients dictate the day's soup and entrée specials, which are posted on a dry-erase board.

artisanal cheese from Port Townsend.

Shawn and Jenessa started dating after graduating from Hillsboro High School. They moved to the Gorge after her parents relocated their metal fabrication business, Columbia River Manufacturing, to Husum in 2002.

In time, several other family members followed.

Two years ago they moved to White Salmon, where they enjoy being able to walk to work.

Shawn says it is hard to express just how much they appreciate the town and community support.

“It’s such a tight community,” Jenessa adds. “People were so kind when we had to close for a month.”

Early on at the converted gas station, they had to deal with what seemed like an endless excavation project on the west side of the store, where a huge underground fuel tank was dug up and removed.

“If you can survive this—two years of Armageddon in your front yard—you can survive anything,” a customer told Shawn and Jenessa.

Telling the story, Shawn grins, noting it is another example of the sort of support they have received.

“People say they are excited to have us in town,” he says. ■