

STORY BY MARIE SHERLOCK

FROM **PRONTO PUPS** TO **TILLAMOOK CHEESE**, THE COAST'S
UNIQUE EDIBLES ARE AS BIG A DRAW AS THE SCENERY.

LAST YEAR, IN a category called “Cheesy Name Origins,” Jeopardy players saw this prompt: “This yellow cheddar: the Oregon county where it’s produced.” A contestant quickly buzzed in—while the entire state of Oregon screamed “Tillamook!” at their television screens.

Tillamook Cheese is clearly the most famous food to have originated on the Oregon Coast. But when millions of visitors flock to Oregon beaches each year, they don’t just eat that heavenly cheddar. They look for fresh seafood and chowder—of course—and pancakes and cranberries, even corndogs and jerky.

We’ve rounded up eight fantastic foods and restaurants that coastal visitors return to year after year. Here is our list, presented north to south. →

PIG'N PANCAKE,

or affectionately, "The Hog and Waffle"

AS A YOUNG person living in Seaside in the 1970s, this was the preferred nickname given to our favorite breakfast spot, the Pig 'N Pancake. On weekends, the line of people waiting for seats would snake out of the restaurant onto Broadway.

It was worth the wait.

Zachary Poole, vice president of Pig 'N Pancake, says that folks still use the "Hog and Waffle" moniker. "It's a term of endearment," he notes.

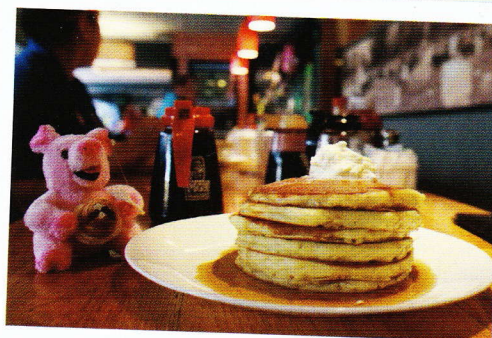
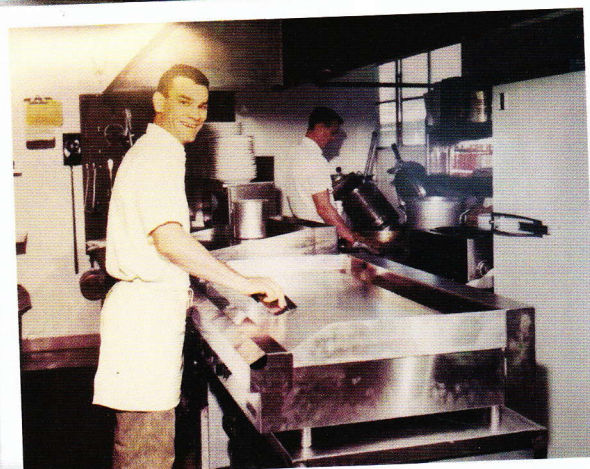
Poole's grandparents, Bob and Marianne Poole, opened the flagship Seaside restaurant in 1961 on a shoestring: \$100 cash and \$2,000 worth of borrowed equipment. It was cozy,

with seating for only 35 patrons.

But it was popular. Through the decades that original location expanded into three adjacent businesses, and now offers 240 seats. There are also Pig 'N Pancakes in Astoria, Cannon Beach, Lincoln City, Newport, and Portland.

Poole says that the most popular dish is bacon and eggs—but adds that they come with pancakes so "Pig 'N Pancake" is essentially the top seller. They still use the pancake recipes created by Poole's grandparents.

And people still line up during peak hours, says Poole. It's still worth the wait. (pign-pancake.com)



TOP TO BOTTOM:
Pig 'N Pancake in the heart of Seaside; Pig 'N Pancake founder Bob Poole; Buttermilk pancakes are made from scratch.



PRONTO PUP: THE ORIGINAL CORNDOG

THE CORNDOG. It could be the quintessential beach treat, particularly in Seaside, where you can ride the bumper cars on Broadway, buy a corndog from the little stand next door, then stroll along the Prom, eating your treasure.

Thousands of coast visitors have enjoyed

these very portable "hot dogs on a stick" for decades. Indeed, that Seaside stand has been schlepping corndogs for over 60 years.

But why is the corndog on our list? Because it was invented in Rockaway Beach in the late 1930s. The story

goes that George Boyington was selling hot dogs on the beach, but the Oregon rains resulted in the buns getting wet—and no one wanted to buy soggy hot dogs. Necessity being the mother of invention, Boyington came up with a batter to coat the wieners before deep frying them, creating a “bun” that would not disintegrate in Oregon’s precipitation. And voila! The corndog was born. (Several years later, Boyington received

a trademark for the name “Pronto Pup.”)

When Portlander Anthony McNamer realized that Pronto Pups were not even sold in their birthplace, he decided to open The Original Pronto Pup, an eatery specializing in the nostalgic treat, in Rockaway Beach. You’ll know you’ve arrived when you see the world’s largest corndog sitting atop the building.

There is some dispute over who actually invented

the corndog. But McNamer, an intellectual property lawyer, has thoroughly vetted the question. His conclusion? “The Boyingtons

clearly invented the corndog in Rockaway Beach.” Case closed. Would you like mustard on that pup? [\(971-306-1164; originalprontopup.com\)](tel:971-306-1164)

This is the spot to order an original pup, a spicy pup, or even a veggie pup.

ABOVE: The Pronto Pup in Rockaway Beach.



PHOTOS COURTESY ANTHONY MCNAMER

TILLAMOOK COUNTRY SMOKER

IN 1975, THREE Tillamook area families—the Crossleys, Smiths, and Giengers—joined forces to found Tillamook Country Smoker (TCS) in Bay City. That makes TCS one of the whippersnappers in this group of famous foods, having “only” been cranking out their sublime smoked products for four decades.

Fast forward to 2017. TCS now employs 300 workers who process 30,000 to

80,000 pounds of meat daily, according to Bob Crossley, director of customer marketing and grandson of co-founder Art Crossley.

Not surprisingly, TCS’s bestseller is their signature jerky, which comes in a head-spinning number of varieties from Old Fashioned and Teriyaki to Chipotle and Sriracha. TCS also produces a slew of other smoked meat products, such as turkey jerky, meat sticks, and steak cuts.

“All of our recipes



COURTESY TILLAMOOK COUNTRY SMOKER

Tillamook Country Smoker jerky.

came from my grandfather, Art Crossley,” Bob Crossley says. Those tried-and-true formulas have worked: TCS products are sold at more than 20,000

locations across the country.

One thing to remember: the Bay City locations are the only spots where you can buy the company’s

two-foot-long pepperoni sticks.

And they still only cost a buck. [\(888-987-4233; tcsjerky.com\)](tel:888-987-4233)



COURTESY PACIFIC SEAFOOD

COURTESY PACIFIC SEAFOOD



MARIE SHERLOCK

PACIFIC SEAFOOD: FISH PEDDLER

THE FISH PEDDLER restaurants and markets, in Bay City and Newport, are surely two of the coolest food experiences on the coast. Visiting one of them may be the ultimate know-where-your-food-is-coming-from adventure.

In Newport, patrons can observe fresh shrimp being processed while enjoying shrimp salads. In Bay City you can watch as workers shuck oysters “the old-fashioned way—by hand with

brute force, leverage and a little finesse,” according to the restaurant’s website. And then dine on those just-saw-them-processed gems.

Both Fish Peddlers are part of the Pacific Seafood empire, one of the country’s largest seafood companies. The Clackamas-headquartered business was formed in 1941 and now employs more than 3,000 workers at 41 facilities in 11 states. The Bay City and Newport sites are the only retail loca-

tions on the Oregon coast.

The agility and tempo of Pacific Seafood’s processors are enough to boggle the

mind. It’s no surprise that the opportunity to watch them in action is a real hit with customers, according to Lacy Ogan, Pacific Seafood’s

communications manager, who notes that bestsellers at the restaurants are oysters on the half shell, fish and chips, and clam chowder.

Dig in—food doesn’t get much fresher than this. (Bay City 503-377-2323; Newport 541-265-7057)



COURTESY PACIFIC SEAFOOD

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Pacific Seafood oyster shuckers; Bay City facility; Fish and chips; Newport facility.

TILLAMOOK CHEESE

FARMERS IN FERTILE Tillamook County started making cheddar cheese in the late 1800s. In 1909, a handful of these small creameries formed a cooperative “to ensure all cheese made in the Tillamook Valley was of the same high quality,” according to the co-op’s website.

They were quite successful in this endeavor (understatement alert!).

From those humble beginnings more than 100 years ago, the Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA) has blossomed into a national brand that consistently wins awards for its high-quality products. The TCCA now includes about 90 farmer-members and produces about 125 million pounds of cheese annually. According to Tori Harms, corporate communications manager, that makes Tillamook the number three selling brand of natural cheese in the US.

You’ve gotta wonder if part of the reason for those

awards (nearly 700 and counting) is TCCA’s structure. “As a farmer-owned co-op,” says Harms, “the values of our farmer-owners drive the way we do business, which means quality and doing things right are priority number one, sometimes above profit.”

And, of course, there’s the fact that Tillamook products simply taste so darned good. (503-815-1300; tillamook.com)



FROM TOP: The creamery draws a steady stream of visitors; Packaging cheese in the factory.



TILLAMOOK CHEESE VISITORS CENTER TO OPEN THIS SUMMER

The folks behind the Tillamook Cheese Visitors Center—the Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA)—could just go quietly about their business of producing delicious cheese, ice cream, yogurt, and more. But, in a real-world version of “if you build it, they will come,” ever since the TCCA opened its first cheese factory in 1949, lots of people have



been stopping by. The center now welcomes more than one million visitors annually. “As far as we’re aware,” says Tori Harms, communications manager, “it is the most visited attraction on the Oregon Coast.”

To accommodate those hungry travelers, the TCCA has continually upgraded the factory’s visitor amenities over the

decades, adding features like the popular ice cream counter and the cheese factory observation area. In 1979, an entirely separate center was built. Cheese lovers kept coming, and a decision was made to once again improve the facility. This time they would construct a new building in the location of the old one.

The new facility will

feature a larger cafe, covered outdoor patio, and improved ice cream counter, as well as an enhanced area for viewing cheesemaking, a theater for watching films about Tillamook Cheese, and more. Harms notes that the new visitors center is scheduled to open in the summer of 2018. Stay tuned. (tillamook.com/cheese-factory)



BLUE HERON FRENCH CHEESE

THERE'S MORE THAN one famous cheese on the Oregon Coast. Just a mile south of the Tillamook Cheese Factory, the Blue Heron French Cheese Company sells its delectable brie—and a lot more.

Wait—brie? As in French brie? On the Oregon Coast? Yes, indeed.

Founders Denny and Chris Pastega started making the

soft cheese wheels in 1979 right there in the adorable, blue-trimmed, 1930s Dutch Colonial barn off Highway 101. By the early 1990s, demand for the brie had outgrown that space and the cheese-making process was moved off-site. But maybe that's for the better, because that original location now offers one of the best culinary experiences on the coast.

Visitors can sample the four brie varieties—plain/traditional, herb and garlic, smoked, and peppercorn—along with other cheeses, mustards, jams, dips, and dressings. Wine tastings—\$5 per flight of five—are available from Blue Heron's expansive wine collection. There's a fantastic gift shop and a popular deli as well.

With a petting zoo



of sheep, goats, llamas, and a donkey, Blue Heron has something for everyone, making it a most-definitely-stop-worthy addition to any Oregon Coast visit. (503-842-8281; blueheronoregon.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Blue Heron's Dutch Colonial barn makes for a tasty and interesting stop; Flights feature Northwest wines; Blue Heron is known for its brie; The petting zoo is a big hit with kids.





COURTESY MO'S CLAM CHOWDER

COURTESY MO'S CLAM CHOWDER

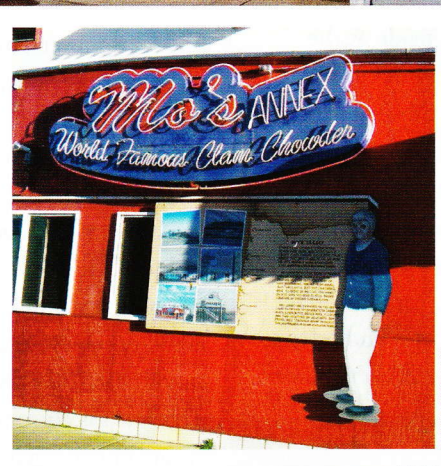
MO'S CLAM CHOWDER

PRETTY MUCH EVERY visitor to the Oregon Coast has enjoyed a bowl of Mo's Clam Chowder. It's comfort food at its best, particularly on a stormy day.

Of all of the Coast's famous foods, Mo's Clam Chowder is most associated with a single individual: Mo,

aka Mohava Marie Niemi, who started her restaurant empire in 1946. Getting to know the woman behind the name somehow adds flavor and character to those steaming hot bowls of chowder.

Niemi was a larger-than-life personality, according to Gabrielle McEntee,



MARIE SHERLOCK

Niemi's granddaughter and co-owner of the restaurant. She had an amazing work ethic, McEntee says, managing the restaurants, hosting a local radio talk show for several decades, and promoting the city of Newport whenever possible.

And she had a big heart. One anecdote that reveals

Niemi's character is the "garage door incident." In 1965, a woman drove her car right into the front of the restaurant. "The story is that my grandmother wasn't upset or angry," says McEntee. Instead, Niemi comforted the driver, joking with her that, no worries, they would put in a garage door so she could drive

in anytime. (They actually did install that door—and it still opens on sunny days to allow tables to flow onto the sidewalk.)

So, what's the story behind the incredible clam chowder? McEntee notes that "a lot of ladies worked for my grandmother and they all had their own recipes. Eventually a great recipe just sort of evolved." It's now used at all eight of Mo's coastal establishments, from Astoria to Florence.

Niemi passed away in 1992. Her legacy—and famous clam chowder—live on. (moschowder.com)



MARIE SHERLOCK