

travel

Finding Friendly, Fresh and Local

On Vancouver Island, BC

By KYM WOLFE

From the Okanagan Valley to Salt Springs and Vancouver Islands, British Columbia offers such a bounty of locally grown food and drink that it was nearly impossible to take it all in during our short stint on the west coast — but we certainly did our best! Fish tacos and wild salmon; breads made from locally grown wheat and grains; cheeses, yogurts and small-batch ice cream made with milk from island-raised raised cows and water buffalo; and the produce! — fresh, seasonal and a staple in eateries that range from food trucks and casual diners to upscale bistros and fine dining restaurants.

Foodies on Vancouver Island were among the first Canadians to act on their concerns about food security, to consciously support local food growers, and to embrace the slow food movement. Cowichan Bay became North America's first officially certified Cittaslow/Slow City in 1999. Then in 2007, two B.C. writers (Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon) wrote *100-mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating*, and ignited the locavore movement. Today the island is a pretty self-sufficient place — you can even season your dishes with locally made sea salt — and creativity abounds. As B.C. food writer Shelora Sheldon describes it, "Menus are not written, they're curated."



We started our travels in Victoria, a charming little city with an overwhelming

number of eateries and a healthy selection of microbreweries and brew pubs. When in doubt ask the locals! That led us to four distinctly different experiences at Spinnakers, Moon Under Water, Irish Times Pub, and Pagliacci's.

Located along the scenic Songhee's Walkway, Spinnakers (308 Catherine St.) opened in 1984 as Canada's first purpose-built gastro brewpub. The warm weather drew us to enjoy our meal on the waterfront patio, with its beautiful view of Victoria's Inner Harbour. Spinnakers menu showcases food from 35 local farmers and producers, more than two dozen craft beers that are brewed on site, and a selection of provincial wines. The seafood chowder and Island grown salad greens were a delightful introduction to tasty local fare!

Moon Under Water (350 Bay St.) is one of Victoria's newer brewpubs. I enjoyed a flight of craft beers, most brewed in-house and a few from the guest taps which feature other Island microbrews. My hands-down favourite was MUW's Creepy Uncle Dunkle, a pilsner



Spinnakers — Canada's first purpose-built gastro brewpub — overlooks Victoria's Inner Harbour



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