



Karen Anderson

Only in Seattle: beefsteak tomato cutlet served by a Northwest lumberjack

In a city renowned for its culinary cuisine, Club columnist Karen Anderson struggles to find a good meal.

Our friends Scott and Katy recently flew in from Florida to stay with us for a night before catching a cruise bound for Alaska. I figured we'd take them to a well-known fish place for dinner. But an email from Katy scuttled that plan.

"They'll have lots of salmon on the cruise ship," she wrote. "So how about something really adventurous?"

Adventurous? The Scholarly Gentleman and I have our favorite sushi bar, taco spot and brunch place. But the comings (and almost as frequent goings) of the city's trendy new bistros, gastro pubs and such have passed us by. By the time we get ready to try a place out, it's shuttered and the chef is off raising heritage sheep on Vashon Island.

I did a web search for "best Seattle restaurants."

"There's Chomp," I reported. "And Gnash. And Slurp. And Nibble."

Their menus seemed to be word salads made up of random phrases from a butcher's manual, a French dictionary, a dessert list and a bartender's guide.

"Confit of tomato haunch with whipped crème and cognac." And "Sweetbreads in sauce au chocolate Grand Marnier."

"Search for steak places," the Scholarly Gentleman suggested. "Or chicken. Or pork. Isn't everyone serving high-end barbecue and charcuterie these days?"

The top hits were: Sabinger, Leistershire & Nordland; Cross & Frith; and Simpson, Swaggart & Penskey.

Had I Googled 'food poisoning lawsuits' by accident? I called Sabinger, etc., to make a reservation.

"You'll need to arrive before 6 p.m.," the manager said. "We like to let the guests catch their own chickens."

Not quite what we'd had in mind. Cross & Frith wanted to give us a tour of their meat locker. Simpson and team suggested that we dine on their upstairs deck so we could enjoy harvesting our own salads from their green roof.

I made a reservation and hoped they'd be providing

pruning shears. Unfortunately, or perhaps luckily, we had to cancel because Scott and Katy's flight was three hours late. When they finally arrived it was 9 p.m. and Scott was in no mood for fine dining. In fact, at that point I wouldn't have trusted him with a pair of pruning shears.

But Katy wanted a "quintessential Seattle" meal. Leaving the guys, we headed for a North Seattle bistro famed for its pan-Mediterranean fusion street food.

When we arrived, the hostess said the only available tables were on the patio. Patio? I thought. But it's ... April. I considered protesting, but changed my mind when I realized

the main dining room was as loud as the Seahawks' end zone after a fourth-quarter touchdown. On the patio, the noise level dropped dramatically, but so did the temperature.

"It's freezing!" I gasped, just as my rear end made contact with a flimsy metal chair.

"It's very Pacific Northwest," Katy observed approvingly. "Dark, rainy, and look, there's a lumberjack!"

She pointed at a burly, bearded fellow in a plaid shirt who turned out to be our waiter.

I peered at the menu. It listed beefsteak tomato cutlet, parsnip hash, and shitake-stuffed zucchini.

"Do you ladies need more time?" Paul Bunyan inquired.

"We need the fish and meat menu," I said.

Paul chuckled. "The chef is now a vegan, so we've revamped our menu. I highly recommend the parmesan-artichoke squash chops with balsamic glaze."

I looked over at Katy with my own squashed glaze. It was 10 p.m.

We ordered. We ate. We shivered. It was, in its way, quintessentially Seattle.

We got home at 11 p.m. and were astonished to find Scott and the Scholarly Gentleman still up and in the kitchen. While Katy related our dining adventures, I sniffed the air. It smelled suspiciously and deliciously of French fries.

"So what did you guys have?" Katy asked.

The two men exchanged looks. I leaned past the Gentleman for a quick glance at the recycling bin. Sure enough, there was a familiar white, blue and orange takeout bag covered in grease stains.

"Genuine Seattle cuisine," Scott told her. "Delicious."

