

Front Page News

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Husband-and-wife chefs win raves at RCC



JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Husband-and-wife team Daniel and Tonya Tosh run the cafeteria at Rogue Community College's Redwood Campus in Grants Pass. The Toshes are known for adding a gourmet flair to their dishes, which one fan describes as "the most amazing food."

By Kathleen Alaks of the Daily Courier

Thai peanut noodle salad. Tuscan chicken sandwich. Vietnamese beef pho. Avgolemono. Happy hippie salad.

That's not the menu for a new upscale restaurant in town. Those are typical offerings at the Redwood Campus cafeteria of Rogue Community College in Grants Pass. The cafeteria.

"The food stands apart for sure. It's unique and original and so flavorful," said RCC faculty member Jenny Jackson. "I'm a good cook and I don't eat just anybody's food. But here, I even buy stuff to take home to have for dinner."

Those raves are directed at chefs Daniel and Tonya Tosh, who have been the creative hands and minds behind the cafeteria for the past two years.

The husband-and-wife team manage the cafeteria four days a week, with a posted set menu of sandwiches, hamburgers, salads and Detroit-style pizza by the slice, augmented with weekly specials that really let them flex their culinary muscles.

"Usually it's really just something that we've been craving," Daniel Tosh said.

Something like homemade lasagna, chicken pot pie or falafel bowls. Like gyros or Polish chicken dill pickle soup.

"They make the most amazing food, gourmet, healthy food," said longtime RCC instructor Deborah Murphy.

The Toshes have a particular fondness for Asian food, so entrees such as Vietnamese noodle bowls and Thai red curry frequently make the menu.

They also make a wide range of salads, including the happy hippie salad with roasted sweet potatoes, red onion, raisins, pomegranate and goat cheese, and a Mediterranean salad with couscous and chickpeas.



"We even converted a beet hater into a beet lover with our beet salad," Tonya Tosh said.

The couple came to Grants Pass by way of the San Francisco Bay Area, where Tonya was an esthetician and spa manager and Daniel was a private chef.

They were considering a move because of the Bay Area's high cost of living and growing population. The pandemic gave them the push they needed.

"We both lost our jobs because of COVID," Daniel said.

They heard about the opening at RCC through Daniel's cousin, who worked at the college. And though they had done some cooking and catering together, they had never run a restaurant.

"This is a new side of the food business for us," Daniel said.

Though not professionally trained as a chef, Daniel had been cooking in restaurants — including a Michelin-starred restaurant in Detroit, Michigan — since he was 15.

After moving to California, he got a job as chef at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program in Woodside, where he made meals for about a dozen resident artists each month, plus staff, and catered special events.

That's where he really learned how to adjust his cooking to individual dietary needs. It's something he and Tonya still do today.

"They go out of their way to accommodate you," said Ron Wood, part of the RCC staff.

On one of his first visits to the cafeteria after the Toshes came on board, Wood asked if they served anything that would fit his low-carbohydrate ketogenic diet.

"And she went out and bought keto bread for me," Wood said. "They just really care about people."

Daniel and Tonya also have set up a system to help students who are unable to buy their own meals, paying forward their tips and other donations into a fund to buy food for those in need.

"I noticed so many students who were obviously hungry and lacking money," Tonya said. "We try to provide this so that people can eat. We want everyone to be able to eat."

Except for the keto bread, Daniel bakes all the breads he serves, from brioche hamburger buns, rye bread for reuben sandwiches, and pita bread for gyros. Even the pizza dough.

Tonya, who got into making cakes during the pandemic, bakes all the sweets, from key lime pie and pumpkin coffee cake, to pistachio shortbread and strawberry-rhubarb streusel muffins. And dozens and dozens of cookies.

"I have become addicted to Tonya's cookies," Murphy said.

Daniel also makes all his own sauces and salad dressings and a spicy Asian condiment called chile crisp.

Traditionally used on ramen and in rice dishes, Tonya confessed she likes it "mixed in with cottage cheese."

As self-described foodies who have a fondness for food-based reality television shows, the Toshes like to cook seasonally and shop locally, often getting fruit and produce at the Grants Pass Growers Market and other local small farms. They serve locally roasted Griffin Creek Coffee.

The Redwood Campus cafeteria, open Mondays through Thursdays, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., is not just for students and staff, but is open to the general public.

The Toshes also do catering and take orders for custom cakes and other sweet treats.

"We try to do fun, delicious stuff," Tonya said. "We just want to make the food as good as possible."

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