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It's more than a name change at riverside Grants Pass restaurant (Business Buzz)

By Kathleen Alaks of the Daily Courier

In October 2024, Taprock Northwest Grill, the iconic, rustic Grants Pass restaurant at the confluence of Seventh Street and the Rogue River, became Cartwright's Northwest Grill, after Jamie and Elvie Cartwright of Cartwright's Markets bought the business from Thomason Hospitality Group.

Now, two years later, Cartwright's Northwest Grill is undergoing an official rebranding, with another name change, updated kitchen equipment, an entirely new menu and a new approach to service.

The official rollout, out with the old and in with the new, takes place with a ribbon cutting at 3 p.m. today.

Welcome to Cartwright's on the Rogue.

"We've been working hard to see that the restaurant reflects the same quality and integrity that people have come to expect from the Cartwright's name," said Blayne Castellano, general manager of Cartwright's on the Rogue.

"The biggest challenge is living up to that reputation. We have to do the Cartwright family proud."

With its classic log-cabin charm and spectacular river views, the three-level building, with two dining rooms, two banquet rooms and two patios, has long been a favorite of locals and tourists alike.

"It's always been the location," Castellano said of the restaurant's popularity. "But the food and service needed to be improved."

When the Cartwright's took over the business two years ago, the restaurant closed for only two days to allow employees to do paperwork to change employers and get an orientation.

The last two years has been a period of transition, with changes taking place gradually rather than all at once.

"We wanted to take our time, to do it right," Jamie Cartwright said. "Good things take time."

Visitors to the restaurant won't see a lot of obvious outward cosmetic differences.

"Overall, the décor didn't change a lot," Castellano said.

There are new carpets throughout, he said, and some tables have been rearranged "to improve the flow and accommodate larger parties."

There are new benches and accoutrements in the lobby, the lower patio has been outfitted with new lighting, including strings of Edison lights and there are new signs both inside and out with the new business name.

One change they will notice, of course, is the menu.



"For the first six to eight months, we pretty much kept the menu the same," Castellano said. "Then we started slowly implementing new menu items, converting to more fresh, quality ingredients."

They have greatly expanded the steak and seafood selections, added a selection of "budget-friendly comfort classics" and a dessert menu featuring items made at one the Cartwright bakeries or markets.

"That's been a huge game-changer for us," Castellano said.

The wine list has been "improved and expanded," he said, and a riverside, beachside tiki-style cocktail menu has been added.

Most of the changes, however, are in areas that most patrons will never see.

Such as the new computer system that tracks what customers are ordering and analyses that data, "so we can see what's working and what's not," Castellano said.

Traditional paper order tickets have been replaced with a touchscreen display system that digitally routes orders to the correct kitchen station, "so that each person in the kitchen has a clear view of what their tasks are," Castellano said. "Our efficiency has grown tremendously."

The kitchen now has a 48-inch open-flame charbroiler to produce "awesome steaks," six new refrigerator units and a $20,000 commercial smoker by Southern Pride for making ribs and cherry-smoked prime rib, which is on the menu Friday through Sunday, he said.

Cartwright's on the Rogue, at 971 S.E. Sixth St., is open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. From May 1 through Sept. 30, it will be open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. The restaurant is closed only on Christmas Day.

Breakfast is served 9-11 a.m.; items from the lunch and dinner menu can be ordered any time.

SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT. A little change can make a big difference. Throughout October, participating Ray's Food Place and Shop Smart stores invite customers to round up the cost of their purchase to the next whole dollar to support the Pink R Breast Cancer Round Up campaign.

During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, each participating store supports a designated local beneficiary that provides breast cancer services in that store's community.

The local beneficiaries are: Women's Imaging Center at Asante Three Rivers Medical Center in Grants Pass; and Providence Community Health Foundation Breast Center in Medford.

The fundraising goal for Oregon and northern California is $15,000.

BUSINESS CLASSES. A series of free classes is being offered for small business owners through RISE, Regional Initiative Supporting Enterprises, a program of the Talent Business Alliance and Phoenix Chamber of Commerce.

The classes are:

- Social Media for Small Businesses (Beginner), 6 p.m. Monday, Talent Library.
- Social Media for Small Businesses (Intermediate), 6 p.m., Talent Library.
- Legal Contracts for Small Businesses, 5:30 p.m. Nov. 9, Phoenix Civic Center.

For more information contact the Talent Business Alliance at 541-897-2070.

STRATEGIC HIRING. Rogue Community College is offering a three-session workshop designed to help employers strengthen their hiring practices and make more confident, effective hiring decisions.

The workshop, Strategic Hiring for Stronger Teams, will be held on Thursdays from 2–5 p.m. Oct. 15-29 at the RCC Riverside Campus in Medford.

Jamee Harrington, RCC's vice president of People, Culture & Safety and chief human resources officer, will lead the workshop.

The cost is $225. For more information or to register, contact RCC Community & Workforce Training at communityeducation@roguecc.edu or 541-956-7303.

DANDY DOZEN. Sunset Magazine has named Grants Pass one of the 12 places travelers should be sure to visit on their next trip to the West.

These 12 destinations are the winners of the Where to Go: Classic West category, in the 2026 Sunset Travel Awards, which were published in the magazine's September issue.

"It's exciting to see Sunset recognize nationally what we've always known locally: Grants Pass really is a special town," said Faith Lemire-Baeten, public relations and visitor experience manager with Visit Grants Pass.

"Between the river and the wine country, the natural beauty and the historic downtown, there's no place like it."

In the article, Grants Pass was noted for its access to the Rogue River, which offers rafting, fishing and hiking, its proximity to the Applegate Valley, which offers agrotourism and tasting rooms, and its closeness to the Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve.

"What defines Grants Pass is its ease, a grounded, welcoming place still genuinely undiscovered," states the article, which was written by Sunset staff members.

The other 11 must-visit destinations are: Grand Canyon West in Arizona; Greater Palm Springs, California; La Paz, Mexico; Loreto, Baja California Sur, Mexico; Nevada's Highway 50 (Loneliest Road in America); San Luis Obispo County, California; Klawock Island, Alaska; Icy Strait Point in Alaska; San Simeon, California; Pasadena, California; and Boise, Idaho.

ON THE MOVE. Gallop 'n Glitz, a women's clothing boutique in downtown Grants Pass, will be moving to a new downtown location. Shop owner Sharon Holder, made the announcement last week on social media.

Currently at 224 S.W. Sixth St., where it has been for nearly 10 years, Gallop 'n Glitz will be moving to 201 S.W. G St., at the corner of Fifth and G streets, the site recently vacated by Don's Bike Center.

No opening date has been noted.

RIBBON-CUTTING. Habitat for Humanity Rogue Valley ReStore is celebrating the grand opening of its new location, with a ribbon-cutting on Tuesday at 11 a.m.

The store is at 2655 S. Pacific Highway in Medford.

Habitat swag giveaways will be offered throughout the day and the first 50 customers will receive a ReStore gift card loaded with a surprise dollar amount.

BOARD MEMBERS SOUGHT. The Williams Community Forest Project is looking for new board members.

The nonprofit organization focuses on educating the public on current events and forest management practices that affect the Williams Watershed. It also organizes monthly hikes and trail maintenance work parties.

To learn more about the board, contact info@williamscommunityforestpproject.org.

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Reach reporter Kathleen Alaks at 541-474-3815 or kalaks@thedailycourier.com. To submit business news online, go to thedailycourier.com, click at lower left on "online forms" and then click on "Business Buzz."