

15 MINUTES

Prepared with care

Alan von der Mehden rarely can be found sitting still. In addition to teaching more than 100 students each year as a full-time culinary instructor at Las Plumas High School, he also provides students with soft-skill learning opportunities through the campus' Las Plumas Catering program. On top of that, von der Mehden is the executive chef and owner of Del Sol Elite Catering and Hospitality—where, separate from his school duties, he often hires students to give them paid job experience. He told the CN&R his aim is to give young people “an opportunity to see a very viable trade,” and at the very least, “know how to cook for themselves.” When he isn't teaching or cooking, von der Mehden travels, coaches the high school's volleyball team, works on other projects (like repurposing furniture into home theater speakers) and fishes in Oregon, where he also has a home. To inquire about a catering gig, call 520-0898 or email vonman40@yahoo.com.

Tell me about your catering business.

With [Del Sol], I hire my students to do the actual work—back of the house, front of the house. I usually do all of the [cooking], plating and everything like that. Everything is attention to detail, seasoning, every part of



PHOTO BY ASHIAH SCHARAGA

everything—I made baked beans last weekend, and people were like, “I've never had baked beans with mushrooms and vegetables in it.” And I'm like, “That's how I get my students to eat them, so you got them.” And they're like, “It was great!” [With Las Plumas Catering], we've done five or six weddings with students ... and they're like, “I didn't have any idea the food was going to be this fantastic, and the service.” The kids rise to the occasion.

Tell me more about your work at Las Plumas High.

[I teach] five periods of culinary. We plate on every level, but in [my advanced class] they get more sophisticated, and then they're the ones that help me with catering. The first thing we do is safety and sanitation, then we do knife skills, and then we

go into things like soups, salads, breads, then desserts, and then we get into meats. Then we'll go into barbecue and then we'll go into stews or slow cooker stuff. It's a full-on culinary experience for the kids. And every one of my students gets a California Food Handlers certificate.

What do you enjoy about catering?

I know that I cook well, and I just love to see how people react to the food. Like contractors, caterers [are known for being] kind of flaky. [But] we'll be there on time, we'll have enough food, we'll never run out. It's one of those things that I pride myself on, making sure that your event is the way you want it. I want the catering job to be what the client wants.

—ASHIAH SCHARAGA
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THE GOODS

Downtown moving and shaking



by
Meredith J. Cooper
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Remember when **Crepeville** and **Burgers and Brew** joined forces to transform that old bank building at the corner of Third and Broadway into a dual restaurant? It was weird, to be sure. Then the respective owners had a falling out and B&B stayed put while Crepeville got to work on its own spot. Not to be outdone, it was nearly the same size, patio and all, and just a block away.

But while Burgers and Brew is consistently filled with patrons, Crepeville is not. With such vast divided dining areas and a strange open kitchen, I dare say I've never seen the place full. That's not to say that the food wasn't good—I had several meals there that I thoroughly enjoyed. But, it's not really all that surprising to learn of its recent closure. I'm happy to report that that huge restaurant space won't be sitting vacant again.

That's because news hit this week that **Woodstock's Pizza**, which was damaged during the spring storms, will be relocating there (240 Main St.). No firm opening date yet, except I'm told it will be in September. I have to assume it'll breathe some new life into that corner. And maybe into Woodstock's, too.

SAYONARA There is more news in the restaurant-closure world. This one also comes with few surprises. **Hibachi Grill Buffet** had decent food the one time I went there, although I'm generally skeptical of large-scale buffets outside of, say, Vegas. But it had taken over the space abandoned by the abysmal **Hometown Buffet**—and it had done little to nothing with the ambiance. It closed without fanfare. We still have **Kwando Buffet**—this town just wasn't big enough for two Asian buffets.

EXPANSION TIME The **Axelssons**, who opened up **Old Barn Kitchen** kitty corner to Crepeville early this year, are expanding their footprint downtown. While **Anton** is the mastermind behind the restaurant, **Chrystal's** passion is in interior design. So, in that vein, she's opening up **Old Barn Milk Paint**—a business she's run online for some time—just a few doors down East Third Street.

According to their website (oldbarnmilkpaint.com), Chrystal discovered milk paint because she was searching for a paint that was chemical-free. It worked wonders, so now she has her own line of it, with a variety of colors, topcoats, waxes and oils. Look out for a grand opening soon.

BUILDING TIME **Clayton Homes** recently opened an office on Feather River Boulevard in Oroville and is offering a \$15,000 incentive to Camp Fire survivors whose homes were destroyed. While the company specializes in all types of building—from traditional homes to tiny ones—the \$15,000 only applies to modulars built off-site. Even so, every little thing helps. Go to claytonhomesoroville.com for more info.

GOOD RIDDANCE It's tire amnesty time at **Neal Road Recycling and Waste Facility**. That means it's time to clean up all those old tires junking up your yard. Those interested must make an appointment for Aug. 9 or 10, but the drop-off is free. Call 879-2352 Tuesday-Friday to make a reservation.

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