

15 MINUTES

On the fly

Dan Valdez refers to himself as an “obsessive fisherman.” By his estimates, he’ll head out with his boat anywhere from 150 to 200 days a year, most years. In 2010, things slowed down as he had the first of several spinal surgeries, which left him partially disabled and without the use of his hands for a brief time. As a method of recovery and physical therapy, he began making his own fly-fishing lures. Valdez found after he had recovered enough to start fishing again that other people loved them—and soon his fishing friends were asking if he could make them all types of lures for all kinds of fish. Eventually, Valdez started advertising his lures and realized he had the workings of a business. Last month, he officially opened Draggin’ Flies out of his home workshop, where he makes his lures for mail order. Check out his Facebook page, Draggin’ Flies by Dan, to learn more or inquire about custom flies.

How did you learn to make your own lures?

The first two or three years I didn’t do anything but shad flies



PHOTO BY JOSH COZINE

for shad-fishing season, but then people started asking, “Do you build this?” or “Do you build that?” And in this day and age, with the internet, you can figure out how anything is built. I sort of took a lot of other people’s ideas and put my own twist on everything.

How is business so far?

I’m only in the first few weeks, but I’ve been selling a whole lot more flies than I had even imagined. Yesterday was the first day I didn’t spend on my bench making flies in three weeks, and I haven’t even really started yet. I don’t even have a website. My goal was to sell 40 a week; right now, I’m selling closer to 150 or 200 a week. It’s kinda crazy to me. I thought I would still be getting the word out.

How long do the lures last?

It depends on the species of fish you’re catching. Something like a sockeye salmon is super aggressive and toothy, so they can beat up a fly after a couple days of good fishing. But some of these flies [for other fish] will last you a long time. They’re not supposed to last forever—they’re made of fabric and feathers. The point is if they attract fish. I had one guy come to me and say, “Hey, I bought this fly from you, and after one day it was ruined.” I asked, “What happened?” and he said he had caught 19 fish with it in one day ... so the fact that it got beat up is OK in my mind. Depending on [the fly], some go for \$4.50, and so far I’ve sold some custom stuff upwards of \$12 a fly.

—JOSH COZINE

THE GOODS



by
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Camp Fire fallout continues

Last November’s Camp Fire took a toll on the local labor market, and we’re continuing to see the fallout. Earlier this fall, **Sustainable Seed Co.** announced it’s making some changes due to the fact that owner **John Fendley** (aka “Farmer John”) and several key employees had lost their homes in the blaze.

The company understandably suffered as a consequence. But, do not fear—loyal customers will still be able to purchase Farmer John’s non-GMO, organic and heirloom seeds. In September, Sustainable Seed Co. merged with **True Leaf Market Seed Co.**, previously a competitor, to maintain the line. The latter is moving to town to take over management.

“It may seem unusual for competitors to work together but there are not many independent seed companies left and we have to stick together,” True Leaf partner Robb Baumann says on the company blog. Find Sustainable Seed Co.’s retail shop at 355 E. 20th St. Word as of now is it’ll remain open.

NEW BOSS Earlier this month, **Amanda Leveroni**, chef and owner at **Bacio Catering, Carryout and Biz Box**, announced it’s time to retire. She’s handing over the reins to former supervisor **Erika Montanez**, who is returning after a 10-year hiatus. “It’s time for me to spend time with my family, watch my grandchildren grow and go exploring with my husband,” Leveroni says in a statement.

CLOSING TIME Two longtime downtown Chico businesses announced last week they’re calling it quits. **Gabrielle Ferrar Diamonds & Exceptional Jewelry**, a staple at Second and Main streets for the past three decades, is liquidating this weekend (sale runs today, Nov. 14, through Sunday). An announcement sent to customers cites the passing of daughter Lisa as their reasoning. **Lisa Nolita** and her mom, Madeleine, opened the shop in 1989.

Kona’s Sandwiches just a block up Main Street also is calling it quits. Well, it’s up for sale at the moment. After 26 years. Anyone want a sammich shop?

Changes also are afoot over at **Roots Catering**. Last week, owners **David and Kelly Gomez** announced they’ll be shuttering their restaurant and concentrating wholly on the catering side of their business. The last day is Friday (Nov. 15).

CHANGE OF PLANS I reported recently that Chico’s **Kmart** appeared to have dodged the bullet of a wave of closures, only to be proven wrong a week later. Last Thursday (Nov. 7), Kmart’s parent company, **Transform Holdco**, announced it will be closing 96 more **Sears** and **Kmart** stores, including the one on Pillsbury Road in Chico. Expect liquidation sales to start Dec. 2.

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