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SPOTLIGHT

Joelle's Fish & Chips opens in Waldport

Susan Schuytema
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JoElle's Fish & Chips owner Susie Montague passes a lunch to a customer. The food truck is located in Waldport near the community center. (Photos by Susan Schuytema)

WALDPOR — A food cart offering tuna dishes is now open in Waldport.

Susie Montague opened JoElle's Fish & Chips in mid-October. She said the name came from the 40-foot troller she owns with her husband, Brett. The couple purchased the Jo El in 2018, and all the tuna Montague serves is hook-and-line caught by Brett. The tuna are processed and blast frozen at sea. The fish are then transferred from the boat to a cold storage facility, then Montague pulls the fish she needs for the food truck each day from the cold storage facility. The tuna is processed to sushi grade — the highest quality and most sustainable tuna found anywhere.

JoElle's menu features mostly tuna dishes: tuna fish and chips, tuna poke, tuna melt and tuna tacos. She also has weekly specials depending on what is in season, what she is in the mood for, what she thinks people would like, and what showcases the range of tuna. "Not everyone is familiar with how versatile albacore can be," she said. "Tuna is something we fish for and freeze so we can have that year-round."

Since Dungeness is now in season, she is featuring crab dishes as well, which she sources from local fishermen in Newport. Her husband fishes for cod, halibut and salmon when they are in season so those will be featured dishes when they are available.

Most items are gluten-free except the tuna melt and the panko-crusted tuna currently on special. The breading for the fried tuna is gluten-free, which also makes the fish stay crisp. She uses separate fryers for vegan items she serves.

Montague worked in restaurants for 20 years and worked at a food cart when she lived in Bend. She said it was a natural progression from working in restaurants for so long to owning her own food business. "I set out to open a food cart. I have always loved the vibe, and the style of carts and the simplicity and the ability for it to be just me."

She said she was fortunate to find a great used food cart that suited her needs. "It was only used for a few months in Junction City, and they took really good care of it," Montague said. "They had an electrician who built it out to code. They spent so much time figuring out how to make it efficient. I couldn't have asked for a better cart."

She rents a spot in Waldport across from the community center and said it is an ideal location. "I am able to be connected to power, water and sewer. And there is covered seating, which is awesome for the coast. It's sometimes hard for all the stars to align, but they did, and I feel really lucky to be here."

Business has been good so far, and Montague said she was glad to open in the fall to work out any kinks before the busy season hit. "I might extend hours during the busy season. I'm still trying to figure things out. It is just me in here, so I am trying to strike that balance."

Montague said she feels fortunate that everything came together to make her food cart dream a reality. "I received so much support from the fishing community, and I'm really grateful for that and happy to be here. Lincoln County and Waldport have been very helpful and welcoming to me."

Located at 280 NW Hemlock St., JoElle's Fish & Chips is open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and is closed on Sunday and Monday. Follow JoElle's Fish & Chips on Facebook and Instagram to see her latest news and specials.