

## Sighs for Fries

### These restaurants serve up chips off the old block

Eric Akis, Times Colonist

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More than 20 places were nominated for having the best, fresh-cut (not frozen) french fries on the Island and they all sounded like winners to me.

Filling their fryer with the most votes, and thus capturing the french fry crown, was Bistro 161.

"Without a doubt, the french fries made at Bistro 161 in Duncan, by chef Fatima Da Silva, are the best," says Times Colonist reader Candace Fertile. "They are served with a saffron aioli. They are worth the drive to Duncan."



Brasserie l'ecole owners Sean Brennan, left, and Marc Morrison savour their pomme frites, named our tasting panel pick for Best of the Island french fries.

**Darren Stone, Times Colonist**

Another fan of the frites at Bistro 161 focused on the artful presentation.

"Fatima Da Silva makes the best frites on the Island," says Mario d'Aversa, who says he popped into this restaurant with some family before a wedding and Da Silva served the frites as an appetizer. "They are thin-cut and are served wrapped in parchment paper, tied with raffia and standing in a special glass container. Fantastic!"

The second place finisher in our poll to frydom was a popular Victoria oyster bar.

"I'm casting my vote for Ferris's Oyster Bar and Grill on Yates Street in downtown Victoria. They've got fries unlike any other that I can think of. It must be that they use peanut oil to give their fries that distinctively delicious flavour. You can choose regular fries, sweet potato fries or a mix of both (my personal favourite)," says Brett Lee.

"Whether you order them all on their own, or as a side to one of their great burgers, they always pile it on high -- they're the kind of fries where you'll be full from your meal but you'll just keep munching on them until the server takes your plate away. They also offer a set of dips (at a small cost) to give your taste buds a vacation in flavour country."

Reader Juliana Rheault could not pinpoint what makes Ferris's fries so splendid.

"What makes them so good? (Perhaps) it's because they're crispy on the outside and soft on the inside? Hmmm, I wish had a bowl of them in front of me right now so I could tell you exactly. All I know is, that when I think of Ferris's, I think of their fries," says Rheault.

Finishing a crisp third in the balloting was a new bistro in James Bay, which one reader said uses the proper technique to fry their potatoes.

"My vote for best pomme frites is Heron Rock Bistro in James Bay. Carefully blanched in low temperature oil first, placed on trays and then placed in very hot temperature oil only when ordered," says Michael Walsh. "It is the best way to do a true pomme frite. They serve a nice garlic aioli with them as well."

Reader Patricia Farley gave one main reason why Heron Rock's fries are superior.

"Consistently fried to perfection," she wrote in an e-mail, adding that no condiments are needed with side orders of these tastily cooked potatoes because they come perfectly seasoned.

Slicing their way into fourth place in the readers' poll was a restaurant where the fries, or in this case, the chips, not the decor, caught the eye of couple relatively new to Victoria.

"We have lived in Victoria for two years and, without a doubt, Salty's (Fish and Chips) has the best chips that my husband and I have ever enjoyed," says Opal Rosamond. "Unfortunately, their food is addictive and has become a weekly must-have. The ambience is not great, but the owners and staff are absolutely wonderful."

Rounding off the top five places to cure a craving for some good fries was Canada's first brewpub.

"The best french fries are served at Spinnakers pub. They are called kennebec fries and they are made from kennebec potatoes," says Wayne McIntyre. "They are only \$5 a plate (a huge plate) and they come with your choice of two types of dip, jerked mayo and smoked garlic aioli, but we have accidentally discovered that you can order the blue cheese dip if you wish, which to us is even better."

Eric Akis's columns appear in the Life section Wednesday and Sunday. The author of the Everyone Can Cook series of books can be reached at [ericakis@shaw.ca](mailto:ericakis@shaw.ca)

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#### READERS' PICKS

1. Bistro 161, 161 Kenneth St., Duncan; tel. 746-6466
2. Ferris's Oyster Bar and Grill, 536 Yates St., Victoria; tel. 360-1824
3. Heron Rock Bistro, 4-435 Simcoe St., Victoria; tel. 383-1545

4. Salty's Fish and Chips, 2950 Douglas St., Victoria; tel. 380-7222

5. Spinnakers Gastro Brew Pub, 308 Catherine St., Victoria; tel. 386-2739

Notables: Fairfield Fish & Chips, Victoria; Fish Tales Cafe, Qualicum Beach; Haultain Fish and Chips, Victoria; National Little League Ball Park, Victoria; Yorky's Fish and Chips, Parksville; Seaside Restaurant, Saltspring Island; Pirate Chips, Nanaimo; Lure Restaurant (Delta Ocean Pointe Resort, Victoria).

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