

## WILL FLY for pie

Spruce Goose Café brings pilots nationwide with delectable dessert

Story and photo by  
Shawna Dixon

Andrea Raymor and Chris Cray had been working together for 12 years when their friend and real estate agent Bernie Arthur presented an opportunity to buy the Spruce Goose Café, a fly-in diner at Jefferson County International Airport in Port Townsend.

The women already had shared experience working at a restaurant, but were unsure whether they were ready to take on an ownership role — that is, until they visited the restaurant for the first time.

Situated parallel to the airport's runways and lined with large windows, the diner's mountain vista is unobstructed, except for the occasional plane coming in to land. If you're lucky enough to be there on a nice day, the patio offers a comfortable place to enjoy the amazing view, clean air and warm sunlight.

Over lunch, Raymor and Cray fell in love with the diner's fantastic setting, family atmosphere and sense of community. On March 6, 1999, they began their adventure as the newest owners of the Spruce Goose Café.

Inside, dozens of model planes hang from the ceiling and aviation memorabilia adorn the walls, given to Raymor and Cray by customers. Wooden propellers, retro posters and photos from decades of regulars cover nearly every available surface. Detailed aeronautical charts from 1967, used by Ron and Barbara Way on their honeymoon and later donated to the restaurant, are displayed under glass on each table. Even the painting that inspired the Spruce Goose Café logo features a local pilot

who started flying at age 13, Summer Martell, and her red biplane.

The café began in the '60s as an informal fly-in pie and coffee stop. Started by "Patty," a pilot whose love of flying kept her in the air during business hours, customers would leave their money on the table in honor-system fashion.

Although the Spruce Goose has since evolved into a full-service, sit-down retro diner with classic breakfast and lunch selections like pancakes, scrambles, chicken-fried steak, BLTs and fish and chips, Raymor and Cray say pie and pilots are still their main attraction.

In fact, they won first place in the nation for fly-in pie from the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) in 2017. They also were in the top 25 for overall fly-in destinations in the U.S.

"We get phone calls from pilots — 'Save us pie! Save us pie!'" Cray said.

"Sometimes, by noon, our pie is sold out completely before it's even out of the pans because they call us [before they fly over]. They want to make sure they get their pie."

"They reserve their pie before they order their lunch," Raymor added.

Over the last 20 years, Raymor and Cray estimate they have made 66,000 pies.

Raymor and Cray bought the original pie recipe alongside the diner itself.

Although they were unable to disclose their precise recipe, they explained that their crust is a vegetable oil-based crust. It holds together just enough to make it to your tongue, where it then crumbles and dissolves, mixing with wonderfully gooey filling.

For their marionberry pie, they use frozen berries from Oregon to provide consistent, year-round quality. Luckily, they keep the added sugar minimal,



Top: view from Spruce Goose  
Bottom: marionberry pie

allowing the sweet-tart berries to shine.

The lingering sweetness of berries and sugar-dusted crust is finished off nicely with a sip of their bold — yet not bitter — coffee, preparing you for the next delectable bite as you gaze at the nearby mountains.

According to Raymor and Cray, fly-in diners are fading. Especially in the Northwest, flying is a seasonal thing and airports are often in remote locations. Although their scenic venues add to the allure of these restaurants, they also make surviving the "off-season" all the more difficult.

Raymor and Cray attribute the continued success of the Spruce Goose Café to their loyal locals and dedicated long-time employees. They even see the same pilots year after year.

The waiters know many of the customers' names and preferences,

### WHAT IS A 'FLY-IN' DINER?

Fly-in diners are just what they sound like: on-airport restaurants, often with plane parking and located somewhere remote and scenic. Aviation hobbyists in pursuit of new places to experience will fly in for a convenient bite to eat before returning home.

and the sense of camaraderie between everyone is palpable.

For anyone wanting to enjoy a relaxing meal, this little café is sure to leave you with a sweet taste in your soul. ■