

PCS Blog

An Afternoon with Rob Nagle and Forktown Food Tours

Posted by Kinsley Suer | 22 January 2013 | Comments (0)

On a recent, chilly-but-sunny Saturday afternoon, I picked up actor Rob Nagle from his temporary Portland digs and drove him over to Northwest Portland. We were on a mission: to eat, and to eat well. Luckily, we were not alone in our quest. In fact, we were going on the [James Beard Food Tour with Forktown Food Tours](#)! Forktown had promised us a delicious culinary adventure through one of Portland's oldest neighborhoods. Armed with empty stomachs and a camera to capture our journey, we set off to explore the connections between Portland's modern eateries and its most famous homegrown culinary star, James Beard. Our afternoon did not disappoint!



Actor Rob Nagle, who plays James Beard in [I Love to Eat](#), poses with our tour guide, Heidi.

The tour group met at the James Beard Award-winning [Wildwood Restaurant](#) on NW21st Avenue. Upon arrival, we were whisked back to an event space known as the Wood Room. It was a beautiful wood-paneled space lit by modern chandeliers. Although the photo below shows the room set with round tables, we were all seated at one long, giant, rectangular table, which presented the perfect opportunity to get to know our fellow tour-goers! While our tour guide Heidi introduced herself and gave us a brief history of the man of the day, James Beard, we were served our first meal. It consisted of roasted garlic challah toast with pork pâté wrapped in bacon, dried plum compote, a duck confit crostini filled with pistachios, and plates of assorted cheeses. Um, YUM! We washed these delectable dishes down with an Oregon pinot that was described as "fruit forward and very well rounded." (I've always wanted to learn about how people come up with wine descriptions, haven't you?)





Our second stop was down the street at [Bull Run Distilling Company](#), which is at the forefront of Portland's crafts spirits scene. Move over, Portland craft beer! Their specialties are rum, whiskey and vodka (and we got to taste all three!). But first, we got a tour of the distillery from one of the owners, Patrick Bernards. He showed us Bull Run's two 800 gallon stills and rows upon rows of huge barrels that are aging various types of spirits. We even got to smell some rum-in-progress (Rob Nagle takes a good whiff, below). Did you know that whiskey is essentially made out of unfinished beer?





After our tour, we stopped in the tasting room to try samples of Bull Run's gin, vodka, rum and bourbon. Then we each got mini Moscow Mules, a delicious cocktail made from vodka, ginger beer and lime juice. By this time we were feeling nice and warm...especially for 3 in the afternoon! In the photo on the below, Rob Nagle tests a sample of Bull Run's delicious bourbon.

One other interesting fact. Bull Run Distillery got its name from the Bull Run watershed near Mount Hood, which is a good source of minimally treated water with no fluoride. According to Patrick, Oregon's minimally treated water is one of the reasons why spirits made here in Portland are so amazing!



Our third stop was at [Besaw's Restaurant](#). After our stop at the distillery, we definitely needed some more food in our stomachs! Luckily, Besaw's did not disappoint. We were treated to an arugula salad mixed with golden beets and roasted vegetables, and topped with a blue cheese dressing. It was

paired with a seasonal mimosa: champagne with a pear-apple reduction. To die for!

Besaw's was established in 1903, the same year that James Beard was born in Portland! We also learned that in 1933 Besaw's was the first restaurant in Portland to get its liquor license back after the end of Prohibition. Who knew?



Next on the agenda? [Kenny & Zuke's Bagelworks](#), where we ate pastrami sandwich sliders (also known as a Reuben) with pickles and sauerkraut, washed down with a Caldera IPA beer. What would a food tour of Portland be without a nice, cold beer? Kenny & Zuke's is one of only a handful of delis in the country where pastrami is smoked over hardwood. It was nice and thick and delectable.

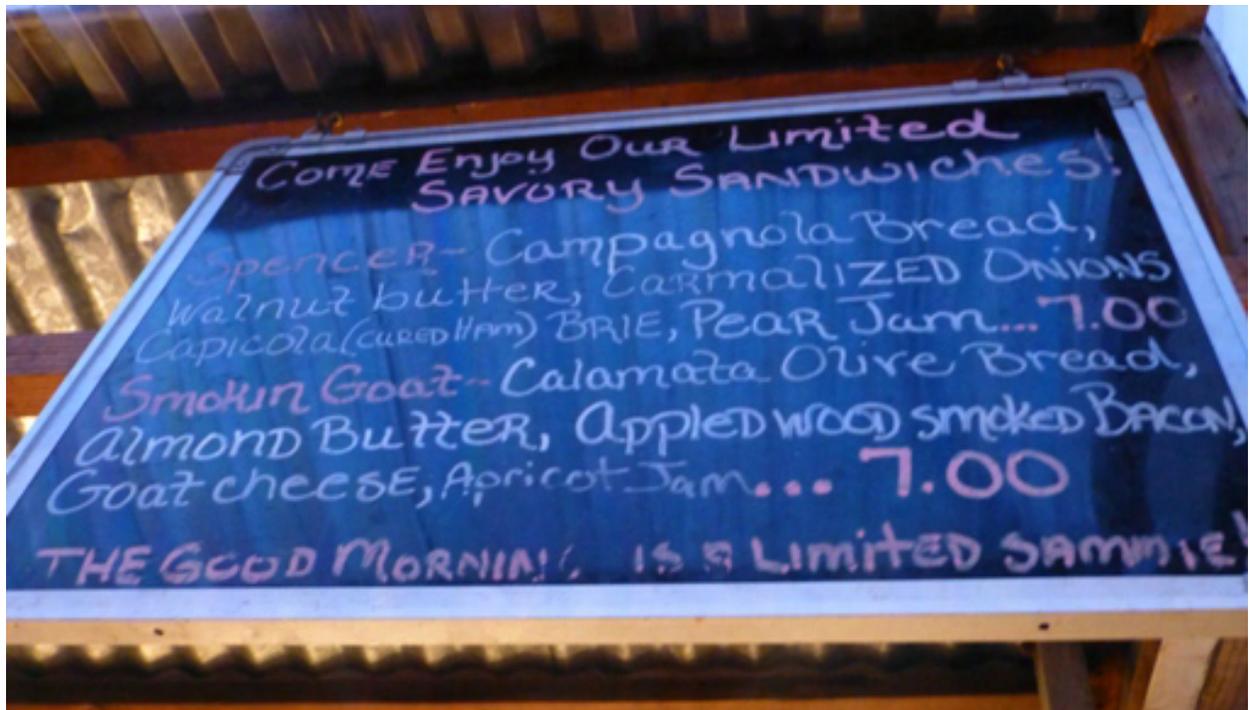


By this time, my sweet tooth was starting to kick in. Luckily, our first dessert item was coming right up! We walked across the street to [Saint Honore Boulangerie](#). Their menu reflects French baking with a Pacific Northwest flair, which is perfect because, although James Beard was born here and loved simple American cooking, he also spent a lot of time eating his way through France. At Saint Honore, we got to try chouquettes, which are delicious little pastries sprinkled with pearl sugar. Parfait!



Besides beer, there was one thing needed to make this tour truly *Portland*. A stop at a food cart!

Our next stop was at [PBJs Grilled](#), a food cart on NW 23rd Street. Are you imagining peanut butter and jelly sandwiches? Guess again. This food cart took things to a whole new level. We first sampled the Smokin' Goat, which was made with calamata olive bread, almond butter, applewood smoked bacon, goat cheese and apricot jam. It was literally unlike any sandwich I have ever tasted. Even after an afternoon filled with food, I could have devoured an entire sandwich by myself! Rob Nagle agreed. We also got to taste the Spicy Thai, made with Challah bread, orange marmalade, sriracha, fresh basil, curry and peanut butter. Mind blown, again.



Our tour was quickly coming to end. But before we bid adieu to our fellow tour mates (who would be heading to PCS to see that evening's performance of [*I Love to Eat*](#)), we made one last stop at [Two Tarts Bakery](#), a sweet little cookie bakery tucked away near NW 23rd. There, we sampled fleur de sel chocolate chip cookies (crispy on the outside and chewy in the middle, with just the right amount of salt) and light, meringue-y macaroons.



If there's one thing I learned about myself on this tour, it's that I LOVE TO EAT.

