



DEBBIE SHORE

LET'S EAT!

D. Shore

submitted photo

by David Morrison

"With earth's burgeoning human population to feed we must turn to the sea with understanding and new technology. We need to farm it as we farm the land."

~ Jacques Cousteau (1910-1997)

"If you don't enjoy life you can't enjoy an oyster."

~ From "The Oysters of Locmariaquer" ('65) by Eleanor Clark (1913-1996)

Considering the amount of local media coverage it has attracted I am guessing that the majority of readers will be aware of the June 23 grand opening of Vancouver

Island University's (VIU) Deep Bay Marine Field Station. But in the event a few readers may have slipped through the net, it is certainly news worthy of reiteration.

According to Don Tillapaugh, Director of VIU's Centre for Shellfish Research, the world class Deep Bay facility was, in a nutshell (or, more appropriately in respect of its design, in a clamshell), "conceived and designed to connect people to the marine environment." Located in the southern end of Baynes Sound, beyond its 'traditional' field station scientific research role the aims of this unique, 13,000 sq. ft. facility are manifold.

Among those aims are initiatives to "empower First Nations communities to succeed in shellfish aquaculture businesses through effective training, mentoring and capacity building," and to utilize the station's state-of-the-art kitchen to advance the skills of VIU's Culinary Institute students in the preparation of seafood. Excitingly, there are also plans in development for cooking courses and regular culinary events that will be open to the general public. I spoke recently with Qualicum Beach-based VIU Culinary Institute instructor Debbie Shore about her role in these plans for the development of the Deep Bay facility.

"Quite a few years ago there was a study done by a fellow named Dr. Bill Pennell (co-founder of VIU's Fisheries & Aquaculture Program)," she began. "I remember him asking me questions about how a research centre might be married up with other Faculties, other parts of the university that might be related in this whole study of food and aquaculture. So that was the first little tidbit, then all of a sudden the Centre for Shellfish Research at Deep Bay is being built, and the thinking was that not only would it be a research station, and there for the community of shellfish growers, but a focused part of the community."

"I've stepped down now but when I was chair of the Culinary Program, brainstorming was going on about what sort of stuff we could do there. So my role was to lock in some of those ideas that still haven't totally come to fruition yet, because it is still so new. Part of that was the planning of the kitchen, how it would be laid out so it could not only be used as a teaching kitchen, but also as a demonstration kitchen and a catering facility. All sorts of things had to be taken into consideration."

The kitchen saw its first action in at least the first and third capacities with the station's inaugural culinary event on January 29 and one that could hardly have been a more congruous launch. International seafood experts, assembled for the SeaWeb Seafood Choices 2011 Seafood Summit in Vancouver, were treated to a sumptuous spread of locally grown sustainable shellfish. Shore and some of her students worked alongside the brilliant Xinh Dwelley of Xinh's Clam & Oyster House in Shelton, Washington to prepare and serve the feast to the delegates.

By all accounts the facility made quite an impact on those gathered that day, but in more ways than through the

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wonderful meal they were presented. The building itself is of such impressive and environmentally responsible design that it is turning heads beyond all aspects of its intended functionalities. One of the greenest buildings in all of Canada, the Deep Bay Marine Field Station has already scooped a National Green Buildings Award this year in recognition of the themes of sustainability that are consistent throughout. For example, recycled materials featured heavily in construction, wood from pine beetle-ravaged forests in its hardwood floors, and in delightful synchronicity it is crushed oyster shells that cover parking areas and driveways instead of traditional materials.

The field station at Deep Bay is unquestionably a meritorious institution for so many reasons, thereby making it a fascinating and ideal location for future culinary events – especially those open to the public. As Shore explains, the appearance of high calibre culinary artists like Xinh Dwelley should become a regular



feature of the work going on at the facility, as well as an obvious way to help generate revenue.

“There are certainly plans to bring in well-known chefs, but who, I’m not sure!” she says. “We have some pretty amazing alumni who are all over the world and always happy to give back. One of our alumni, David Wong, I’m sure would say he’s up for that.”

If the Nanaimo-born Wong is confirmed in the field station’s future culinary programming it would be big news and an extremely popular event. An ultimate example of local-boy-made-good in a very competitive field, the master chef has represented Canada in international competition and is highly respected around the world.

“So, yes, there will be, but it’s a matter of getting in touch with people, seeing what they’re doing, seeing if they’re interested,” Shore continues. “All of the chefs at VIU are really connected with some good cooks, but as far as the Food Network-type chefs they often have agents, so I haven’t gone there yet! If we can tune into the ones we’re so proud of first, and put on something kind of fun and interesting, that’ll be pretty neat. The other thing, too, is that our students will often be down that road, working for them, with them, or becoming those guys.” ~

For further information about the Deep Bay Marine Field Station, please visit www.viu.ca/deepbay/