

Her art's tasteful

Beverly Shipko's succulent oils are on exhibit in Rockport

FOOD & DINING / C1

★★

\$1.80
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July 5, 2017

Portland Press Herald

pressherald.com

North Korea's ICBM presents a direct challenge to Trump

WORLD / A2

WEATHER:
Plenty of sunshine
High 82
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Marching to her beat no burden for Collins

A rarity among Republican senators after opposing the health care bill, she greets July 4th crowd unbowed.

By DAVID WEIGEL, MURRAY CARPENTER and JULIA O'MALLEY
The Washington Post

EASTPORT — For the 15th year, Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, spent July Fourth marching through this town of 1,331, a short boat ride away from Canada. She walked and waved, next to marching bands and Shriners-driven lobster boats. Her constituents cheered — and then asked whether she would vote against repealing the Affordable Care Act.

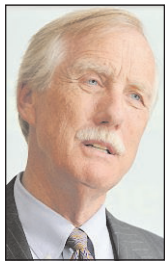
"There was only one issue. That's unusual. It's usually a wide range of issues," Collins said in an interview after the parade. "I heard, over and over again, encouragement for my stand against the current version of the Senate and House health care bills. People were thanking me, over and over again. 'Thank you, Susan!' 'Stay strong, Susan!'"

Collins, whose opposition to the Better Care Reconciliation Act helped derail last week's plans for a quick vote, is being lobbied to smother it and make Congress start over. Republi-

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SEN. SUSAN COLLINS



SEN. ANGUS KING



Staff photo by Brianna Soukup

Smoke and light fill the sky above the crowd watching the fireworks display Tuesday at the Fourth of July celebration on the Eastern Promenade. The crowd was estimated at around 50,000 people.

Displaying with fire

An estimated 50,000 people watch Portland's Fourth of July light show.

By PENELOPE OVERTON
Staff Writer

Kevin and Mary Starr of Buffalo, New York, celebrated Independence Day with bellies full of lobster at the Fourth of July fireworks display in Portland.

The retired couple began their first-ever trip to New England in

Maine on Tuesday, with plans to visit Acadia National Park later in the week, when a local recommended they watch the fireworks on the Eastern Promenade.

They kicked back in borrowed lawn chairs with thousands of their new friends listening to the Portland Symphony Orchestra at the

eighth annual Stars and Stripes Spectacular.

"It's perfect," Kevin Starr said, gesturing out at a Casco Bay stacked with boats. "It's just the right size. Great weather. A real fine show."

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Both parties take credit for ending shutdown

As state government prepares to reopen Wednesday, Republicans and Democrats say they stood strong on the most critical issues.

By PENELOPE OVERTON and KEVIN MILLER
Staff Writers

State offices in Maine will reopen Wednesday after the three-day government shutdown, but Republicans and Democrats aren't exactly ready to move on after their contentious battle over the biennial budget.

In the hours after the new \$7.1 billion state budget bill was passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Paul LePage early Tuesday morning, members of both parties rushed to claim victory for ending the impasse while telling voters they had stood strong on the issues that mattered most.

Those included getting state employees back to work, a \$162 million increase in public education funds, and elimination of both the 3 percent income-tax surcharge on the state's wealthiest residents and a 1.5 percentage point increase in the lodging tax.

Republicans said LePage "ended the shutdown" and got government "moving again" without raising Maine taxes.

The governor tweeted a message — "I have signed a budget with no tax increase" — and a photo of himself signing the deal amid a gaggle of applauding onlookers. A big American flag is laid out across the conference room table.

"I want to thank legislators for doing the right thing by passing a budget that does not increase taxes on the Maine people," LePage said in a written statement. "I especially thank the House Republicans for standing strong throughout these very tough budget negotiations to protect Mainers from an unnecessary tax hike. I am pleased to announce state government will reopen."

Within hours, state agencies such as the Maine Lottery and Department of Labor began announcing plans to resume regular operations Wednesday.

In an interview with the Portland Press Herald early Tuesday, LePage said state employees had not been hurt by the shut-

"WE TOOK A LOT OF PRECAUTIONS TO REALLY NOT HURT ANYBODY."



GOV. PAUL LEPAGE

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR: LINES TODAY WILL LIKELY BE LONG / B2

Community takes novel approach to save bookstore

When an independent shop changed hands in Blue Hill last winter, customers helped financially to ensure it stayed local.

By BOB KEYES
Staff Writer

BLUE HILL — Samantha Haskell's first day on the job at Blue Hill Books came in July 2007, when the store's owners hired her for a one-night gig to oversee throngs of kids giddy with excitement about the midnight release of a Harry Potter book. After graduating in 2010 from the

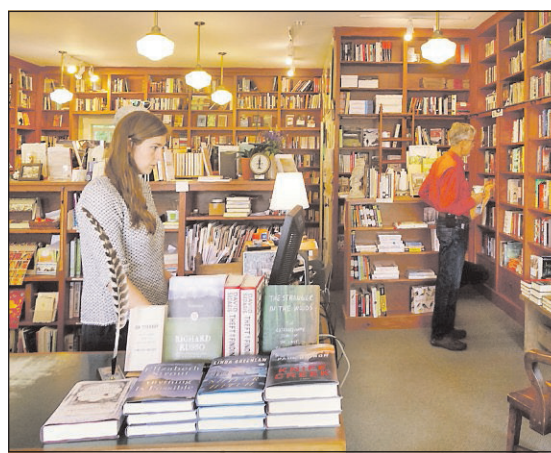
College of the Atlantic, where she studied how to keep rural communities healthy and strong, she returned home to Blue Hill and began working at the store full time.

Ten years after entertaining 200 kids who stayed awake past their bedtimes to await the magic midnight hour, Haskell, 30, now owns the little white bookstore

with blue begonias on Pleasant Street, thanks to the financial support of the community she is trying to enrich. The bookstore is so important to the community that residents went to unusual lengths to make sure it stayed open and local.

Fearful of losing a community magnet and meeting place and concerned about what would happen if the store fell into the

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Staff photo by Gregory Rec

Samantha Haskell places a book order recently while Steve Davies peruses the shelves at Blue Hill Books. Financial commitments from customers helped to secure the sale of the store to Haskell.

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Staff photo by Brianna Soukup

Hudson Bush, 3, looks back at his mom, Quynn Morehouse, as he plays last week in the hillside stream at the new Children's Garden. "He loves it here. It's easy for kids and it's calming for adults," Morehouse said.

New garden at Fort Williams suffering some growing pains

Users are mistaking the frog pond, a work in progress, for a wading pool and damaging the feature.

By KELLEY BOUCHARD
Staff Writer

CAPE ELIZABETH — The women spread their towels by the water's edge and sunbathed. The children plucked stones along the shore and tossed them into the water or piled them into mounds. Some kids waded in and swam around. One family brought an inflated raft to float on.

You might think this slice of regional bliss occurred at Crescent Beach or Kettle Cove, but you would be wrong.

The Children's Garden at Fort Williams Park has become wildly popular since it opened last September, but what is intended to become a frog pond filled and surrounded with natural plantings has instead been treated by some visitors as a wading pool or miniature water park, said Arboretum Director James McCain.

In the process, they have nearly destroyed a garden feature that isn't even completed yet, like many other facets of this 1.5-acre attraction that is the epitome of a work in progress.

"Even last year, when the garden first opened, kids were splashing around and

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"Lobster From Acadia (Little Cranberry Island)," oil, 7 by 5 inches.



"Strawberry Kiwi Blueberry Tart," oil, 30 by 30 inches.



"Stack of Oreos," oil on panel, 5 by 7 inches.

Taste in art

Alive with juicy fruit, runny sauces and crumbs that pop off the canvas, Beverly Shipko's food paintings look good enough to eat. The artist shows her work through Aug. 1 at the Michael Good Gallery in Rockport.



Photos courtesy of Beverly Shipko

Beverly Shipko, at work on "Falling Blueberries," oil on linen, 16 by 20 inches.

By BOB KEYES
Staff Writer

Beverly Shipko's first exposure to fancy food came at the side of her grandfather, a Russian immigrant to Michigan who operated a gourmet grocery store in Detroit. He filled his display cases with beautifully prepared foods of all kinds, including sweets that seduced Shipko and made her dreamy. "My father was a dentist," she said. "I didn't get to have a lot of candy and sweets."

The vision of three-berry pies, fruit cheesecakes and forbidden chocolate live in her memory and in her art. This month, the New York artist shows dozens of her oil paintings of ice cream, cakes, pies and other delicious-looking temptations at the newly renovated Michael Good Gallery on Commercial Street in Rockport. The exhibition, "You CAN Have Your Cake and Eat It, Too," is on view through Aug. 1, and the gallery hosts a reception for Shipko from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, July 8. The reception will include edible versions of the kinds of foods that Shipko creates in her paintings and drawings.

"When I think of memories of food, I think about those beautiful gift baskets with cellophane and bows that my grandfather sold," she said, conjuring her childhood from the 1950s and '60s. "They were so beautiful. It was a gourmet store, so the displays were big and beautiful and tempting. That's when I started thinking about the presentation of food."

BEVERLY SHIPKO'S 'YOU CAN HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT, TOO'

WHERE: Michael Good Gallery, 325 Commercial St. (Route 1), Rockport
WHEN: Exhibition is on view through Aug. 1, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Saturday; reception with the artist from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, July 8
INFORMATION: www.michaelgood.com

Her love of food and its display became a focus of her creative life. She got a job in advertising to support her work as an artist, and was assigned to accounts of candy manufacturers, which allowed her access to endless boxes of candy bars and chocolate. One of her first jobs involved a photo shoot for Twix candy bars. It was her responsibility to break up bars to prepare them for the photo. "I sat there for two days breaking candy for the shot. That is all I did," she said. "That kind of gave me the idea to paint broken cookies or half-eaten candies and cakes. Working in advertising proved to be very good for me. It was artistic. It was all about design and communication and what things look like and how people perceive them. It all came together for me after that."

She's been painting food for about 20 years, drawing on her childhood art lessons at the Detroit Institute of Art and a pair of art history degrees. She

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Far Breton makes clear the near, and very dear

For a transplant to Maine, a slice of the cake evokes not only a sense of place but of promise, too.

By ANNA STOEISSINGER

In December of 2015, one of the worst winters on record in the Northeast, my husband and I moved from Florida to Maine. In one minute we were driving beneath cloudless blue skies, salty air breezing in and out of the windows, sunlight hitting our cheeks and forearms, scarfing down saltwater taffy, and the next we were huddled against each other in the temporary housing provided by the new company where I would begin work, afraid to go outside and hike the mountains of icy snow at every curbside.

I should mention that we are both native New Yorkers, and so Florida and Maine each felt like additional stops on the Odyssey to us — strangeness and



The far Breton

unfamiliarity at every turn. The slow pace of Maine, for example, threw us off entirely, and we found ourselves internally self-combusting as we waited in lines while friendly salespeople chatted with regulars at the register. But it was undeniably beautiful, and the first time we

saw the waves crash against the cliffs at Two Lights State Park, the white surf and the cormorants and the intricate, varied textures of the rocks that invited us to climb on them like children, we decided we could stay. That was almost three years ago. Since then we have sought out, as we do on each of our adventures, the food. To us, it's the most important part of a place, and we were determined to find the best of it.

The best of it began with a single slice of cake, so sublime that I travel an hour and a half each Saturday from Portland to Bath and back to buy it. But to explain its power, I must first talk about the madeleine, familiar to those who are fond of French tea cakes, and even more so to fans of Proust, for whom the first bite of cake so famously unleashed a rich and involuntary recall of childhood.

Personally, I have never under-

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Beryl Sidelinger serves a piece of the far Breton, a dessert that originated in Brittany, to a customer at the Bath Farmers Market.

Staff photos by Jill Brady



"Confection Obsession," oil, 36 by 48 inches.



"Reese's Peanut Butter Cup," oil on panel, 8 by 10 inches.



"Hostess Cupcake," oil, 8 by 10 inches.

ART

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sees her work following in an artistic tradition of painting food that dates to the time of the Roman Empire and ancient Egypt, when pharaohs were packed for the afterlife with ample food to get them through. We know this, because their stories were illustrated on the walls of the tombs by artists, who depicted porters carrying fish, fruit and fowl for the long journey of the dearly departed.

Henri Matisse populated his interior views with plates of fruit and seafood, and American art history tells a story of a long line of painters devoted to still-lives of plates of food.

For a long time, Shipko paid attention to the career of American pop artist Wayne Thiebaud, a contemporary painter whose colorful images of gum ball machines and candy counters have made him popular with museum curators. She did not want to appear to be a copycat, so she tried to avoid similar subjects. As her own career developed, so did her confidence and self-expression. A few years ago, she decided, "Enough worrying about Wayne Thiebaud. I am going to paint what I want."

In Maine, her closest contemporary may be Justin Richel, whose paintings and sculptures of sweets have long resonated with the art crowd. The Portland Museum of Art is showing Richel's "Endless Column" of cakes and teapots, which tempts visitors to sit and snack.

Shipko lives in Westchester County, New York, just outside of New York City. The show at the Michael Good Gallery came about by chance. She visited the gallery last summer, and began a conversation with gallery manager Avi Good, who invited

Shipko to show her work because it was too good to resist. "I just want to lick these paintings. You look at them and you say, 'Oh my god, I want to eat that,'" Good said. "She has great technique, and they are just fun.

It's hard to find paintings that cross such a broad spectrum. You look at them and you understand what they are. There's nothing confusing about them, and they are compositionally excellent."

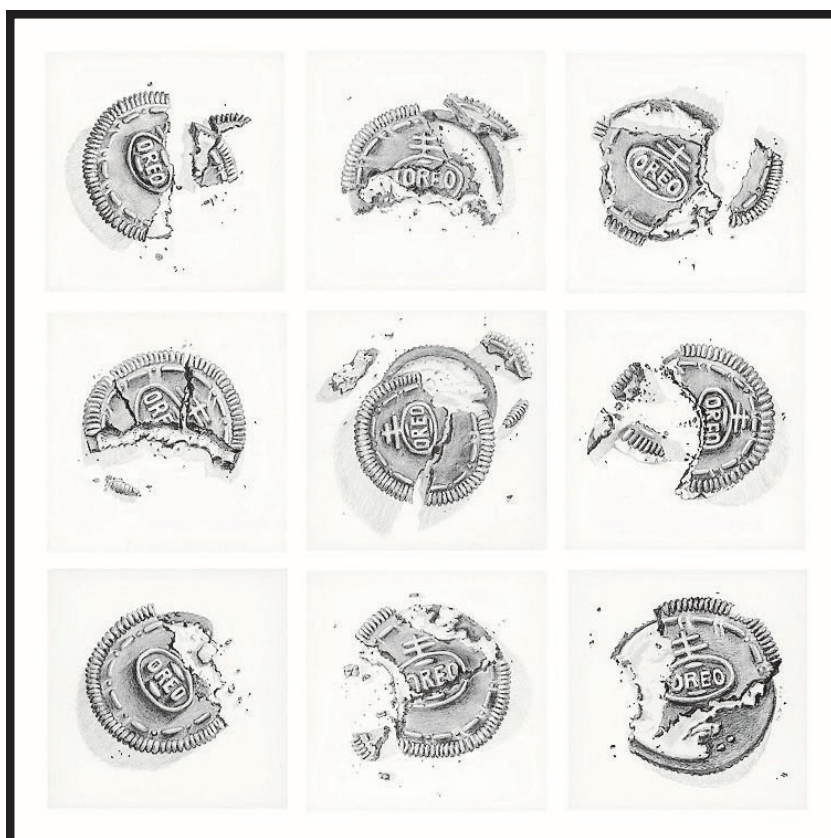
Shipko compares painting to cooking. Both activities are creative and technically challenging, and both require the personal flair of the creator to distinguish the work. She views the act of applying paint to canvas as similar to spreading a cream-cheese frosting over thick, rich layers of cake. The canvas is her cake, the paint her frosting. In some of her paintings, she simulates crumbs by creating texture in the paint.

She's adept in the kitchen, and cooks now more than she ever has. But she has to be mindful of her time, she said, "because if I am cooking that means I am not painting."

She learned from her career in advertising that painting food is a hard thing to do well, just as it's challenging to take photos of food that make it look as fresh as it is in real life. Food is perishable, and ice cream melts. She began down this path before digital photography, and learned to work quickly.

"Food is perishable," she said. "Even though you think that it's going to stick around for awhile, it doesn't. If I tried to paint ice cream, I would have 10 minutes to get the image before it would melt," she said. "I remember bringing home a fruit tart and painting that, and after three or four hours in, all these fruit flies came out. It's organic, and sometimes it changes."

One of her specialties is painting



"Oreo Mandala: Studio Tour Oreo Cookie Contest Entries," limited edition giclee print. Painting half-eaten Oreos is a specialty of Shipko's. "Everyone bites cookies differently," Shipko says. "You don't think about it, but there is personality in the way people eat."

saucers, syrups and other toppings as they ooze. She likes finding just the right moment when a fruit sauce drips over the edge of a cake and spills onto the dish. It's like a still-life in motion.

A decade ago, she bought a refrigerator with a large freezer so she could preserve her desserts in whatever state she liked best and pull them out a few days later to keep working on them.

Another specialty are half-eaten

Oreo cookies, a concept that dates to her days on the Twix candy bar account, when she prepared for a photo shoot by breaking up the candies. She got the idea to paint half-eaten Oreos during a community open house at her studio, which she hosts every year. She invited people to take a bite from a cookie, and if she used their cookie in her paintings or drawings, she named the piece for that person.

"It becomes their portrait," she

said. "Everyone is different. Everyone bites cookies differently. You don't think about it, but there is personality in the way people eat."

She has about 70 paintings and drawing in the exhibition. Some, like the colorful display cases filled with pies and cakes, are nearly life-size. At least one painting from Maine is in the show – a painting of a lobster, based on her visit last summer. She spent a lot of time in Portland last year, and was impressed with the city's food culture. She took lots of pictures.

Shipko will talk about her work and her history with food during the reception at the gallery on Saturday.

No doubt, her grandfather will be part of the conversation. His name was Sidney Fishman, and as she gets older she thinks about him often. Every year, he traveled to New York to attend food shows and returned to Detroit with exotic things no one had ever seen before, she said.

"Other people were bringing home candies and cookies and cakes, and my grandfather was bringing home chocolate-covered ants and grasshoppers. They tried to get me to try one, but I wouldn't do it."

If not for him and his beautiful display cases of gourmet food, Shipko probably wouldn't be an artist.

"I think those early years are very formative. Food was something that I was familiar with growing up, and I ended up working in it many, many years in different capacities," she said. "I thought I would run out of ideas or things to paint, but we've had this proliferation of bakeries and restaurants, so I just keep painting."

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BRETON

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stood the appeal of the madeleine. Even those that are the most perfectly, meticulously made, do nothing for me. I find them dry, boring, and overall, a great disappointment in the otherwise glorious world of cake. Perhaps it is fear that makes me criticize them; the pleasure of eating coupled with a rush of involuntary memory frightens me. What if something I love, say, brandade de morue, were to suddenly trigger a long-buried trauma, or if the salted goat's milk caramels I eat daily were to unleash a parade of childhood images I have no interest in revisiting? I shudder to think of the deepest, simplest pleasure of food taking on a complicated and bitter aftertaste. But so far, it has not, and Proust's legendary tale has remained largely unrealized.

About a year ago my boss, who lives in Bath, introduced me to the farmers market there, and more specifically, to a woman who sells a cake called "far Breton." A far is a custardy pudding cake, with the smooth, silky texture of flan. It was born in Brittany, where it is traditionally dotted with macerated prunes and raisins. It is the close, but I would argue bolder and more precocious cousin of the clafouti, which is made with cherries and had a moment in the spotlight about a decade ago. The far Breton is neither too rich, nor too light, neither too bland, nor overly sweet. The first bite – best eaten holding the triangular slice in your hand – is a smooth, all-encompassing, rush of ingredients that seem to blend right there on your tongue and resolve just as quickly. It starts with the delicate custard, flawlessly smooth, a uniform silkiness that lasts the entire bite, then the juice from a rich, almost bittersweet prune, a crust that's meringue-like in its lightness, a scent of vanilla perhaps more delightful than the vanilla itself, a whiff of giddiness coming off the raisins, heady and bright, and finally, the powdery dusting of confectioner's sugar that comes and disappears just as quickly, a sort of ecstatic sweetness like the joy of extracting a droplet of honey from a honeysuckle flower right onto your tongue. This cake is not about memory; it is about the most present of



Staff photo by Jill Brady

The far Breton is a custardy pudding cake, ethereally light.

presence, a meditative and mindful experience that miraculously requires no effort at all.

Putting aside memory, everything about my experience with far Breton has felt involuntary. The entirely irrational decision to spend an hour and a half in the car just to get my hands on it; the panicked call the day before market to Beryl, who makes it, to put aside several slices for me, lest the entire cake be gone before I arrive; my thrill at the way Beryl packages each piece, wrapped in wax paper and placed in a little sleeve and then a brown bag; taking the first bite in my car; powdered sugar scattered like a light snowfall around my seat, leaning back, closing my eyes, and thrilling at the taste.

What it unleashes exactly, I don't know. But it isn't memory. This cake takes me forward, not back. It is a weekly promise, and a reminder, of what carries me: My husband, Keith, my 1-year old son, Henry, who was not even supposed to be born given my history of an aggressive, mid-stage stomach cancer, Keith's silly songs and Henry's belly laugh, thoughts of what Keith and Henry and I will do this summer – stop at Two Lights State Park and watch the waves hit the rocks, stuff our cheeks with lowbush blueberries, laze on the Eastern Prom and watch Henry watch the boats.

So as I continue to eat my far Breton, I am involuntarily propelled to start the engine and drive home to



Photo by Meredith Brockington

Anna Stoessinger with her husband, Keith, and 1-year-old son, Henry.

my two boys, so that I can look at Keith and not have to eat anything at all to remember that he is everything, and so I can touch Henry's soft hair and not have to remember that he is a miracle, and maybe we will all look at each other and not have to remember why we're a family, or that we'll always be one, and wonder how we ended up in Maine, and where this salty air will take us next, and what sweet, unique things we'll find there.

Anna Stoessinger lives in Maine with her husband, Keith, her son, Henry, and their dog, Bess. She is a writer who works in advertising.

SLAW

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chiffonade
12 ounces radicchio, chiffonade
12 ounces frisee, chiffonade
12 ounces Caesar slaw dressing, see recipe
6 ounces Parmesan, grated
12 ounces bacon lardons, crisped
2 ounces Italian parsley, finely minced

Toss three lettuces with dressing. Serve, topped with grated Parmesan, bacon and parsley.

CAESAR SLAW DRESSING

Makes about 1 1/4 cups

4 ounces Parmesan, grated
1 shallot, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
3 ounces cider vinegar
1 ounce lemon juice
1 cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon hot sauce, optional
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 ounce anchovy paste
Salt and pepper to taste
2 teaspoons finely minced parsley

In a large bowl, whisk all ingredients until combined. Chill 30 minutes before using.