



PHOTO BY MATT WHITMEYER

Trish Aser learned the trade in numerous area restaurants and also in Wyoming, then opened her own place here and called this home.

# The scent of GOOD FOOD

Trish Aser follows a long trail home  
to run The Brown Hound Bistro.

**Story by Marci Diehl**

IT MIGHT NOT SOUND LIKE A PROMISING LOCATION AT FIRST: “KIND OF IN THE MIDDLE OF nowhere, people think,” says Trish Aser, owner of the Brown Hound Bistro, which sits just up the road from the junction of routes 21 and 64 in Naples, high in the hills above Canandaigua Lake. “But then they find a surprise.”

The surprise is a restaurant that has kicked up a buzz for its delicious, sophisticated food and intimate, charm-infused atmosphere. One food critic from Rochester raved about his experience there, saying the long-distance trip for him was worth it.

Besides, being “out there” was the whole lure for Aser, 40. “It’s really a nice environment to have a business. This has all the challenges and stresses that a business carries, but living in such beauty and a peaceful environment helps a lot.”

To tell the story of how she got there is to follow a long trail, going back to Aser’s days of waitressing and managing restaurants. The Brighton native worked for a while at a sports bar on Monroe Avenue in Rochester. Fun, but “not too challenging,” she says. So she went into management at Bruegger’s Bagels for five years, which she calls “a fantastic experience—very development-oriented, lots of training and autonomy. But getting up at 4 a.m. got old.”

Next came managing a Pizzeria Uno. Finally, longing for a more normal schedule,



she took a job at Kodak. “I think I stood up in my cubicle for the first month—I was so used to running on my feet at the restaurant. I lasted about a year.”

That winter, while skiing in the Rockies, she looked out at the mountains spread out before her and had an epiphany. She asked herself, “What am I doing with my life?”

She decided to move out west. “People said to me, ‘You’re so brave!’ and I’d say, ‘I’m so *afraid!*’” Aser says. But a question kept spurring her on: “What if I go through life and never try anything?”

Aser sold her home in Rochester, packed up and drove to Wyoming with Henry, her Lab mix—the original brown hound. She found a job in Jackson at a popular restaurant, the Blue Lion.

She spent a year and a half in Wyoming. “I spent my life savings, traveled a ton and skied a lot.” She returned to Rochester, but missed the lifestyle of the west. Then she found South Bristol.

Aware of the traffic on Route 64 to Rochester—and consulting Department of Transportation statistics to be sure—she



PHOTOS BY JILLIAN SEATON

Chuck and Renee Stern eat brunch at the Brown Hound Bistro. The bistro makes it a point to use local ingredients in its recipes and to offer many local wines.

bought a used concession trailer on eBay, set it up on the road and served coffee and fresh-made breakfast sandwiches. When a restaurant space in a 100-year-old house nearby became available to rent, Aser sold the trailer. The Brown Hound Bistro was born.

"I believe there's room for great food in Canandaigua, Bristol and Naples," Aser says. "People were waiting for it." Her restaurant is "reminiscent" of the Blue Lion in Wyoming. "I keep the food fresh and creative."

The menu is one page of "eclectic American" food with a local focus, made fresh to order. There are "always good fish options"—ahi tuna filet, salmon, the spicy seafood sauté in a peanut sauce. Other dishes on a recent visit included vegetarian options, linguine with chicken, Mediterranean vegetables, and beef tenderloin filet. Baked goods tempt from a glass case near the hand-made oak bar. In spring and summer, the fare is lighter.

Aser and her chef embrace the "buy local" attitude. "We're a member of the

Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty and Pride of New York. We buy spices from the Canandaigua Spice Company; eggs from Adam's in Naples, lamb from Sweet Grass Farm."

With 18 seats inside and seating for 26 on the deck during warm weather, the Brown Hound offers the coziness of a small venue. Portraits of the now-departed Henry with Aser on hikes out west greet customers in the foyer, and guests are invited to bring in their own hound portraits for the "Hall of Hounds" in the restroom.

Aser finds that the recreational options of the area—from hiking to skiing—keep her wanderlust well satisfied. "The Finger Lakes have a vacation-year-round feel. You feel like you're in another country!" she says.

After years of exploring other paths and places, Trish Aser has found her home. "I feel like it's my kind of place."

*The Brown Hound Bistro is located at 6459 State Road 64, Naples. 374-9771; [www.brownhoundbistro.com](http://www.brownhoundbistro.com).* ■

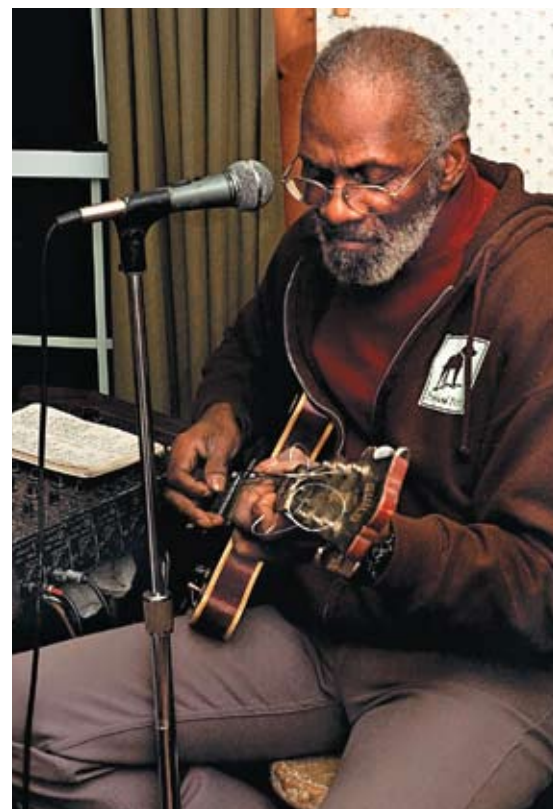


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