

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Carmen Jaramillo with local news and commentary for November 30, 2021.

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Local fine dining favorite Alchemy Wine Bar and Bistro is transitioning into new ownership this week. Kris Nelson, PT restaurateur and business mogul who first opened Alchemy over 10 years ago sold the restaurant this month to chef Adam Levin. Nelson told *The Leader* she was feeling like she needed to focus her attention on her other three businesses Sirens, Old Whiskey Mill, and The In Between. She said she felt like she could do a better job of managing each restaurant with less on her plate – no pun intended.

Internally, Nelson has been talking about selling Alchemy for many years. She reportedly has plans to reopen The In Between, a craft cocktail bar below Sirens on the second floor which has been closed since the pandemic. Regulars will notice however that the two local bartenders who first put The In Between on the map, Alexander Moats and Sophie Elan, will most likely not be returning. Nelson also plans to reopen the lower deck, previously known as the Seafood Bar in the same building as part of The In Between.

Levin first became acquainted with Nelson in early 2020 when the pandemic first hit. He owned a number of restaurants in Beijing but was trapped in the US when the world came to a halt. Over the next year several of his overseas businesses closed, leaving him looking for new opportunities. According to *The Leader*, Levin boasts many accomplishments in the food world over a long career including being the executive chef at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas and being named number one chef in America while working at Wolfgang Pucks' Spago restaurant. Go on Levin's facebook and you'll find a photo of him arm in arm with former President Bill Clinton. The caption states that they met backstage at a Rolling Stones concert in Hong Kong. Levin said the new menu will lean towards seafood and steak with some vegan and vegetarian options.

What has previously set Nelson's restaurants apart has been her dedication to craft cocktails and a full bar menu at each of her restaurants. Alchemy specifically was known for its long and unique original drink menu and its dedication to rare and expensive wine and liquor. Reportedly Levin will be moving away from this aspect of the business and focusing on a shorter drink menu.

Good luck to you, Adam. I hope you have an easier time with the place than Kris did. Would KPTZ listeners ever be interested in hearing about my experiences in the restaurant industry here in town? I'm thinking of writing my own kitchen confidential.

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There was no Board of County Commissioners meeting this week, meaning there was also no COVID-19 update from our intrepid health officer Dr. Allison Berry. In lieu of the regularly scheduled programming, I wanted to provide a little information for KTPZ listeners about the new COVID-19 variant out of South Africa that has been named a variant of concern by the World Health Organization. Since the new variant – named Omicron – was identified last week, countries around the world have rushed to implement new travel restrictions that echo the early days of the pandemic. The United States put a hold on travel to the US from eight African countries, including South Africa.

Dr. Anthony Fauci said it will take at least two weeks to determine Omicron's transmission rates and the severity of illness that it causes. Scientists so far believe that it may spread more easily and that vaccines will likely be less effective against it. But it is also thought that the current vaccines will still offer protection from severe illness and death. Vaccine manufacturers Moderna and Pfizer are preparing to reformulate their shots to better combat the Omicron variant, if necessary. A Pfizer spokesperson said they can adapt the current vaccine

in six weeks and ship the first batches in 100 days. Moderna President Dr. Stephen Hoge said the company could have a new vaccine in two months and clinical results in three. Moderna began working with the new variant the same day alarm bells were raised in South Africa. Hoge said that from initial research, this variant combines the worst qualities of previous variants including decreased efficacy of the vaccines found in the Beta variant and the rapid transmission of the Delta variant. He called it a “frankenstein mix of all the greatest hits.” According to the *New York Times*, some evidence suggests that the Omicron variant may also more easily overcome natural immunity to the virus, meaning we could see more reinfections in people who have already recovered from COVID-19.

On the potential for Omicron to come to the United States, Fauci said it is a matter of not if but when and we must be prepared to take whatever steps necessary to combat the rogue variant. Now is a great time to get a booster shot if you can find a local appointment. And, if you aren’t vaccinated, please, please, please go out and get your first shot today. You are protecting yourself and you are protecting your community. Please help us end the pandemic in 2022.

Now for our local COVID-19 case numbers. After not updating new cases over the holiday weekend, Jefferson County Public Health added 15 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday, bringing the total confirmed case count to 1,297. 24 cases are in active isolation and one person is hospitalized.

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That's all from me for today. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five PM Monday through Thursday and at noon on Friday and Saturday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Carmen Jaramillo. Thanks for listening.