

Bread Lab turns WWII buoy into an oven

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An 800-pound steel buoy used to protect Puget Sound from submarines during World War II now serves as a wood-fired oven to bake breads, pizzas and recently a Thanksgiving meal.

The Washington State University Bread Lab west of Burlington installed the oven about a month ago in a new beer garden in the parking lot, said Bread Lab Director Stephen Jones.

Jones said the design for the oven was inspired by one at Dented Buoy Pizza at Finnriver Farm and Cidery in Chimacum, near Port Townsend. He said the cidery found this latest buoy sitting in some bushes and gave it to the Bread Lab.

Jones said the buoy held up steel nets in Port Townsend Bay to defend the town against submarine and torpedo attacks during WWII.

Mary Ryan, curator at the U.S. Naval Undersea Museum near Poulsbo, wrote in an email that round floating buoys held the tops of defense nets near Port Townsend during WWII. Historic photos shared with the Skagit Valley Herald show buoys that look similar to the Bread Lab's new oven.

Ryan said the museum does not know how many buoys still exist, but has not heard stories of them being repurposed.

Jones said once the buoy — which has a diameter of five feet — was delivered, employees from Skagit Valley Malting cut it in half and added legs. They also created a smaller dome from an old propane tank to fit inside the buoy.

The next step was to add insulation, including 60 glass bottles and concrete, to the oven's base. With the added material, the oven weighs about 5,000 pounds, Jones said.

The parts were welded back together and the oven was installed in the beer garden.

Jones said the oven can reach temperatures up to 1,000 degrees.