Belltown Pan

An Instrument as Implement for Community Traditions

Belltown Pan

An Instrument as Implement for Community Traditions

With gratitude to the
Dxʷdəwʔabš (Duwamish) Host First Nation

Cover: *Two Bells*, 2018.

Title page: Sand casting process for aluminum Belltown Pan.

© 1980-2018 by Buster Simpson.
All rights reserved.

All photos by Buster Simpson except:
Gerard Albanese, 3A, 15B
Creative Commons, 45
Paul Dorpat, 14
Amanda Heins, 4 (inset)
Russell Johnson, 43
Trey Lamont, 38
Bruce McKim, 11
Port of San Francisco Archives, 42
Port of Seattle Archives, 2
Public Domain, 42
Deborah Reinhart, 6-7
Mark Sullo, 4, 8B, 10, 12B, 22, 31
Elaine Thompson / AP Photo, 44
Jeff White, 1

Book Concept: Buster Simpson.
Design & Layout: Buster Simpson and Todd Metten.
Photo Editing & Compositing: Todd Metten.
Copy Editing: Peg Butler, Buster Simpson, and Hillela Simpson.

Printed and bound by Magcloud.

Orders, inquiries, and correspondence should be directed to:
buster@bustersimpson.net | www.bustersimpson.net

Bell Street Terminal, 1931. Courtesy of Port of Seattle.

Belltown appropriated William N. Bell.
Bell Street appropriated Belltown.
Bell Street Terminal appropriated Bell Street.
Bell Icon appropriated Bell Street Terminal.
Belltown Pan appropriated Bell Icon.

Raw casting of Belltown Pan fresh out of the sand mold with vents and sprue button intact.

1980 Belltown Root Pie Concept: Buster Simpson.
Original Tinned Copper Bell Pan: Walter White.
Patronage: Belltown Café.

2017 Aluminum Belltown Pan Design: Buster Simpson,
Aluminum Belltown Pan Casting: Jeff White, Urban Accessories, Tacoma, WA.
Private funding with additional support from Seattle Parks and Recreation.

With Thanks to:
Belltown Café – Ben Marks, Pat Tyler and Phil Messina and staff, 1978 to 1983.

Owners & Staff of Participating Restaurants ◇ 2017 ◆ 2018

BELLTOWN BREWING ◆
Marcus Charles - Owner
Amanda Heins - Chef
Dom Micomonaco - Chef

CURSED OAK ◇◆
Mike Carroll - Owner
Simon Pantet - Chef

CYCLOPS ◇◆
Gina Kaukola & John Hawkley - Owners / Chefs

JERK SHACK ◆
Trey Lamont - Chef / Owner

LOCAL 360 ◆
Marcus Charles - Owner
Scott Emerick - Chef

MACRINA BAKERY ◆
Leslie Mackie - Owner / Baker
Rebecca Gutierrez - Baker

MAMA'S CANTINA ◇◆
Marcus Charles - Owner
Paulino - Chef
Ben - Chef (2017)

ORFEO ◆
Terresa & Kevin J. Davis - Owners

PINTXO ◇◆
Amanda & Cory Chigbrow - Owners
Amelio Sansone - Chef
Clayton Kinsey - Chef

WHISKY BAR ◇◆
Colin Pickering & Donna Pickering - Owners / Chefs

Funders / Sponsors for the Belltown Root Pie Event:
Seattle Parks and Recreation, Metropolitan Improvement District, Belltown Community Council Parks + Arts.

Special Appreciation to:
Belltown Community, Jane M. Savard, Jon Kiehnau, Cory Chigbrow, Marcus Allenbach, Tom Graff.

Belltown Pan

An Instrument as Implement for Community Traditions

Belltown Pans call the neighborhood together. They are iconic cooking implements, social catalyzers, and symbols of community involvement, unique to the Belltown neighborhood in Seattle. The Pans are symbolic of bells as instruments, used to call people to action; to commemorate or celebrate; and as location markers or aids to navigation. Belltown Pans hang nearby, at the ready to be deployed when needed to engage and feed the community.

A tradition of sharing Root Pie baked in a Belltown Pan on Groundhog Day, began years ago at the Belltown Café. From 1978 to 1983, the Belltown Café on First Avenue was a neighborhood hearth. In 1980, it also became home to the Groundhog Day Root Pie tradition. The Café proprietors often traded food for art with their customers. One exchange resulted in the creation of the first Belltown Pan, a large copper pan shaped like a bell, fabricated to function both as an exterior sign for the Café and as a baking pan that would fit into a commercial oven.

On Groundhog Day, the Belltown Pan would be taken inside, cleaned and used to bake an impressive root pie for all to enjoy. The "roots" would be an assortment of below-ground vegetables such as parsnips, rutabagas, beets, carrots, onions, potatoes, and garlic. The next day the Pan would be returned to its outdoor station to function as a memory marker.

Preparing roots for pie in the Belltown Café Kitchen, c.1981.

Groundhog Day is celebrated on February 2nd, about halfway between winter solstice and spring equinox. The prognostication of winter's end during the first of February has taken place since ancient times. Many spring welcoming traditions include watching for weather omens, such as looking for a groundhog's shadow. At this long-dark time of year, our metaphorical root cellars are depleting. The community comes together to share the last of winter's reserves and acknowledge the imminent return of spring's replenishment; to dine as the groundhog, with a taste of roots, checking for shadows to foretell the length of winter's grip, and to celebrate resilience.

Since the 1970's, the Belltown community has been engaging in civic activities that bring neighbors together for a cause, including planting the street trees that are now along First Avenue; initiating the Belltown P-Patch Community Garden and Growing Vine Street; and establishing the Apex Co-op. After the Belltown Café closed in 1983, an organization called the Strand Helpers, which fed Seattle's homeless, was based in the building until it burned down in 1987.

Now in the 21st Century, Bellwether Housing occupies a new building on the old Belltown Café site. The neighborhood population has grown and a renewed sense of community has developed, prompting a revival of the Groundhog Day Root Pie tradition and the reproduction of multiple editions of Belltown Pans, cast from recycled metal, to propagate collective restaurant participation. When multiple Belltown Pans are used concurrently for a common purpose, the community engagement effect is magnified, multiplied and memorable. When not in use, they hang in public view. In so doing, the Pan accrues and stirs memories, meanings and metaphors, and becomes a subtle form of community benefit branding. Sightings of Bell Pans reinforce a restaurant's place in and commitment to the neighborhood and, in turn, shore up community patronage.

Belltown Pans symbolize community action for the common good and are ready to be utilized whenever the neighborhood wants to call people together. Perhaps "National Bell Ringing Day," proclaimed as July 4th by President John F. Kennedy, could be acknowledged with pies and bell-ringing to celebrate liberty, justice, freedom, and all those who engage in public service work.

At one time, the Dxʷdəwʔabš came together for potlatches, sharing the native camas bulbs, swamp potatoes, and cattail and wapato roots. In the art world, this form of cultural engagement is often called social practice; in sociology, it is a social catalyst; and in the Belltown community, it is a sustainable business ethic and a bellwether for local civic urbanism.

Root cellar near Punxsutawney, PA.

West side of First Avenue between Bell Street and Battery, c.1981. The Oregon Hotel (far left) is the only building in the photo still standing. The Belltown Café was on the north side of the Oregon (shown here is earlier business, Café Belltown). On the corner of Battery and First was the Leader Building. Today, Wilkeson sandstone blocks salvaged from the columns of the Leader Building, are now stacked on a steel pallet to act as seating at a Puget Sound overlook atop the Battery Street Tunnel.

View looking south on the west side of First Avenue showing Belltown Café with Belltown Pan mounted as exterior sign. Note the absence of trees on First Avenue.

Proportioning roots in Belltown Pan Pie, Belltown Café, c.1981.

ROOT PIE FOR BELLPAN SIGN SEATTLE 1980
revised 1981

Slice into bits equall amounts (there abouts) of the following; rutabaga, parsnips, beets, carrots, yams, onions, garlic, Celery root and other edibal roots, ~~XXX/XXX~~ spice with ginger salt peper butter mix well, ~~XXX/XXXXX/XXX/XXXXXX~~ THYME SAGE SOME COULD BE PRE-SAUTE TO HOLD INDIVIDUAL TASTES
Boil enough potatoes that when mashed and blended with milk, butter (with a taste of salt and pepper) forms a putty consistency that is enough to apply to the baking pan on botton sides and as a toping.

When pan is prepaired with the mashed potato ~~XXX~~ putty crust, fill with ~~XXX~~ seasoned roots, apply ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ mashed potato crust topping.

Bake at 350 degrees for 3-4 hours until tender BROWN CRUST AND SERVE WITH SLAW.

(Above) Original Root Pie recipe, a work in process. (Right) Two SX-70 Polaroids documenting serving from and cleaning Belltown Pan prior to reinstalling as sign, c.1981.

Baked Root Pie fresh out of the oven. Ben Marks,
Belltown Café owner / cook, and Buster Simpson, c.1981.

Staff photo by Bruce McKim

Ben Marks dishes up another portion of root pie on Groundhog Day.

At the sign of the bell, they root for tradition

by Don Duncan
Times staff reporter

The Belltown Cafe's familiar bell-shaped copper sign, with the copper clapper, is hanging in front of the building again after a day in the oven.

Two years ago, the owners of the popular artists' hangout at 2309 First Ave. decided to take the sign down every year on Groundhog Day.

They would use it to cook up an enormous "root pie."

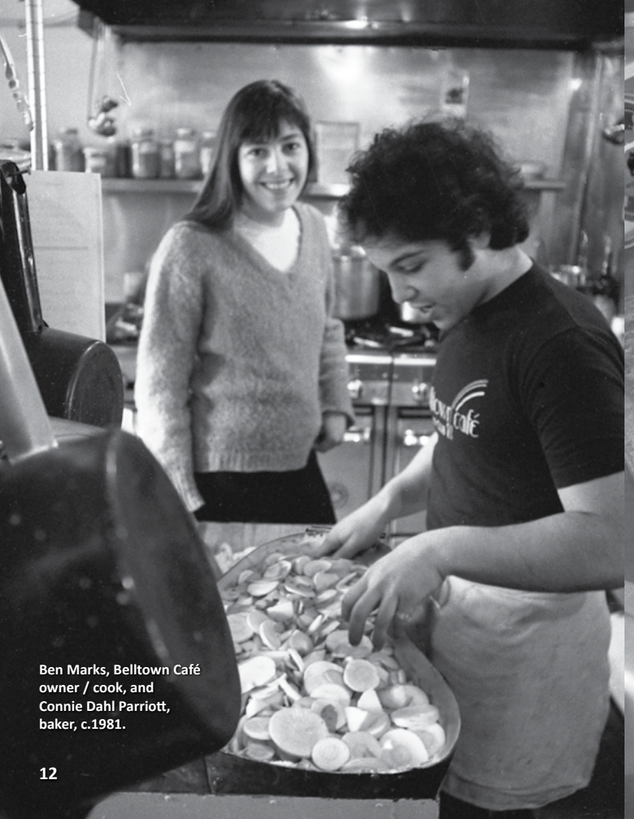
This year's pie contained onions, garlic, parsnips, carrots, rutabagas, celery root, sweet potatoes and white potatoes — "things that come out of the ground, the way groundhogs do," said Ben Marks, who owns the cafe along with Pat Tyler and Phil Messina.

Buster Simpson, who designed the sign, and Walter White, who constructed it, were among those who paid 99 cents for root pie, coleslaw and a bell-shaped chocolate cookie.

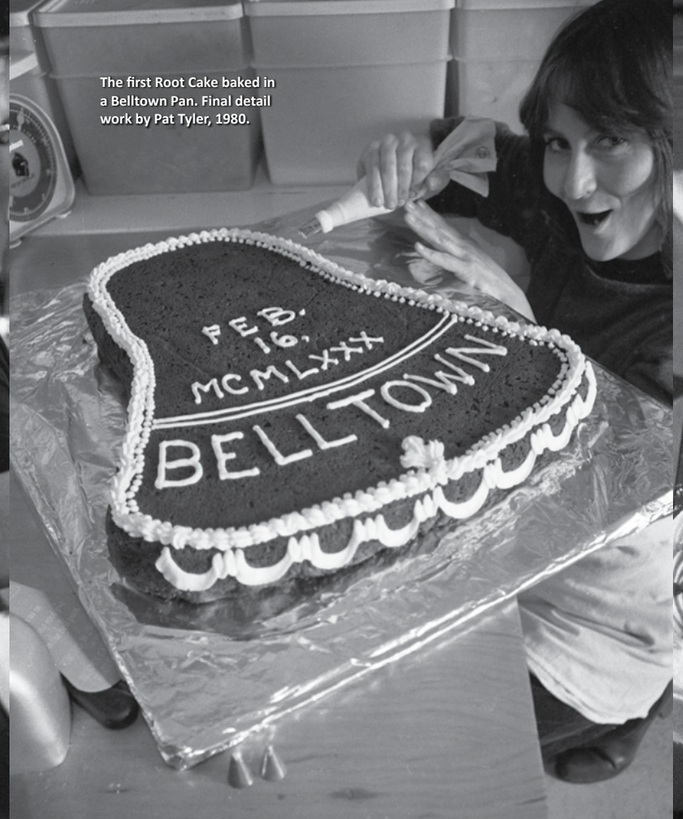
"We're really into helping local artists," said Marks, pointing out a variety of new works purchased this year.

"I just finished our income tax, and we spend a bigger percentage of our gross for art than the 1 per cent that the city does," Marks added.

The copper bell survived the oven nicely. Patrons, who devoured about 40 pounds of root pie, did likewise.



Ben Marks, Belltown Café owner / cook, and Connie Dahl Parriott, baker, c.1981.



The first Root Cake baked in a Belltown Pan. Final detail work by Pat Tyler, 1980.

The last Root Cake at the Belltown Café, 1983.

Buster Simpson, busboy and dishwasher.

Paul Dorpat and Nick Vroman at Belltown Café counter. (Inset) Groundhog Day, Walter Lieberman with eye on the pie, c.1982.

Walter White creating original tinned copper Belltown Pan, c.1980.

Buster Simpson dishing up cole slaw and pie, 1983. Final year at the Belltown Café.

Belltown Café with
Belltown Pan sign, c.1980

Former location of the Belltown Café.
Now, a Belltown Pan plaque hangs at the entrance to
Bellwether Housing's Oregon Apartments, adjacent
to Sassafras clothing store, 2018.

Original copper Belltown Pan suspended over special event Tide's Out // Table's Set banquet, during ***Buster Simpson Retrospective*** at Frye Art Museum, Seattle, 2013.

Aluminum Belltown Pan plaque on Bellwether's Oregon Hotel entry column, former location of the Belltown Café, 2018.

2017 Belltown Pans with roots, ready for dispersal to participating restaurants.

Sandwich board in front of Macrina Bakery, 2018.

Jane M. Savard (in green scarf) and another volunteer handing out Mr. Potato Head "kits of parts" at Belltown Park. The Mr. Potato Head creations became informal entrance tokens at participating restaurants, 2017.

Residents with their creatively assembled self-portraits at Belltown Park, 2018.

Gina Kaukola and John Hawkley, Cyclops Café and Lounge, with their Root Pie. If they eat their Root Pie, they can have some Root Cake, too. Root Cake from Macrina, 2017.

John Hawkley, Cyclops Café and Lounge, 2018.

Clayton Kinsey and Cory Chigbrow, Pintxo, 2017.

Cory Chigbrow at Pintxo's new location, 2018.

Chef Simon Pantet, left, and owner Mike Carroll, Cursed Oak, 2018.

Simon Pantet, Cursed Oak, 2018.

Mama's Cantina, 2018.

Ben at Mama's Cantina, 2017.

Whisky Bar Staff, Liam Kennedy & Tressa Points, 2017.

Jeff Geltine, general manager, dishing up pie for customer, and Alex Vane, bartender, Whisky Bar, 2018.

Belltown Brewing's Groundhog Root Pie with iPhone photo inset from earlier in the day, 2018.

Kevin J. Davis, Orfeo, 2018.

Ben Davison, Sous Chef,
Local 360 Café and Bar, 2018.

Sylvain Berthe, general manager,
Local 360 Café and Bar, 2017.

Trey Lamont's
Jerk Shack, 2018.

Jerk Shack, a testimonial to
pie popularity, 2018.

Two clean plate root-eaters at Pintxo, enjoying a glass of wine before heading off to Macrina for dessert, 2018.

Macrina Bakery,
Belltown Pan Root Cake, 2018.

Bell percussion parabola focuses sonic waves, aiding ship navigation into port, Embarcadero, San Francisco, CA, c.1970s.

The Bell in Hand Tavern, Boston. MA, 1795. The carved wooden sign was used to mark a business owned by the town crier.

Aid to Navigation. Glass bell, electromagnetic clapper, and brass parabola. Installation at Frye Art Museum, *Buster Simpson// Surveyor*, 2013.

In this photo, First Nation peoples lead the Womxn's March in Seattle, March 20th, 2018.

"Potlatches are one of the traditional ways of practicing the power of giving. They bind inter-tribal communities as one. Potlatches raise the awareness of our heritage and honor the poor, the elderly, the children, the leaders and all of our loved ones. They help us make personal, family and tribal decisions and practices public. This is how in our communities we make such things as names, marriages, birthdays and songs real or 'legal'. Potlatches give us the opportunity to practice our spiritual beliefs, share food and singing and dancing ancestral songs, thereby reestablishing our connection with our past and our future."

- Duwamishtribe.org

The cacerolazo tactic of banging pots and pans to protest social injustice is used to protest social injustices during a Quebec student strike in 2012.

Back Cover: 1974 Canadian logger shirt repurposed in 2018 as tablecloth, with original tinned copper Belltown Pan.