

## Black Butte Ranch to host more fat-bike events

Black Butte Ranch is continuing the Cow Patty Crit race series with a race on February 7, and one on March 14.

Blazin Saddles and Black Butte Ranch bring riders further installments of the Cow Patty Crit. They provide four fat bikes for each race, and riders provide the power and gusto.

The course will be designed to inspire anyone to give it a whirl (so it won't be too tough). Expect stairs, ramps, logs, tight corners, and cyclocross-style barriers. The course will be set up in a field near Big Meadow Golf Course.

Prizes will be up for grabs for each category from Blazin Saddles Bike Shop and Black Butte Ranch. Online registration, \$15, closes Thursday, February 5, at 11:59 p.m. Register at <https://ultra.signup.com>; search "Cow Patty Crit." Or register for \$25 on the day of the race from 10 to 11 a.m.

Races begin promptly at noon.

A warming fire will be provided for participants and spectators. Beverages (including beer and hot chocolate) will also be for sale at the site.

Competitors should wear appropriate clothing, including closed-toe shoes and a helmet (both required).

## Sisters Bakery celebrates 20 years in business

By Jim Cornelius  
News Editor

For two decades now, Sisters Bakery on Cascade Avenue has been a destination stop for locals and visitors alike. Whether it's an over-the-pass traveler looking for a pastry and a cup of coffee for the road or a local in need of a cake for a birthday, Melissa Ward and her staff at Sisters Bakery have been meeting their needs for 20 years.

Owning and operating an iconic Sisters business wasn't part of a plan for Ward — she sort of backed into it, pushed by life's circumstances.

"My life was falling apart," she recalled. "I wanted a place where my kids could come after school."

Sisters Bakery was up for sale.

"I had some money from some property on the coast. So I put that down on it. Just jumped in with both feet," she recalled. "People thought I was crazy to do it. I was an English major. Classic story."

There was not a whole lot in the English major's background that would point to success as a baker and the proprietor of a small business. She had a little transferable experience running the kitchen at Applejack's, a small grocery and deli then operating in Sisters.

But Ward had the intangible quality that separates the successful from the would-have, could-haves in the

world of small business: She was simply utterly determined to make a go of it.

"There were days when I said, 'I'm going to make this work, no matter what,'" she said.

Ward says that learning to manage a staff was the toughest challenge — but it also provided the greatest rewards. Her hiring policy was unconventional. Her primary interview point was to say: "Intrigue me." That meant she ended up working with a lot of interesting folks — most of whom had little or no experience.

"Almost everyone who has come here has learned the trade on the job," she said.

She consistently employs about 17 people on a wide variety of schedules. Many teens in Sisters have learned to work and be accountable in Ward's employ.

"It's a great way for kids to get their feet on the ground," she said.

The work isn't as all-consuming as it used to be, thanks to manager Jeremy Bates.

"I've really got it a lot easier than I used to because I have management now," Ward said.

Someday, Ward plans to move on from the work that has defined her life for the past two decades, and maybe dust off those English major chops.

"I'm eventually going to retire and do a lot of writing," she said. "See my family



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Melissa Ward has been providing baked goods to locals and visitors for two decades.

more. Be a real granny."

Ward has worked very hard to make Sisters Bakery a signature Sisters business — and it keeps being discovered.

"People discover us all the time and they're amazed at the variety of stuff we have in here," she said.

From top-quality pastries to lovely breads, to cakes and donuts — there's plenty to tempt at Sisters Bakery. And Ward and her staff will accommodate special requests and special needs, like the increasingly prevalent need for gluten-free products.

"You have people who are coming in for some sin and pleasure and they have

someone with them who is gluten-free," Ward said. "We try to have something for them."

Ward says her greatest rewards have been her interactions with her staff and with customers — and being a contributing part of the community of Sisters. She feels very protective of that community (*see related stories, page 1 and 31*).

At the end of the day, Melissa Ward has enjoyed something basic but significant, that most everyone aspires to and not everyone is able to achieve: "The idea of going to work every day and having it be enjoyable."

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