

SATURDAY FOOD AND FUN

The Eugene Saturday Market is packed full of fun foods, great entertainment and locally made crafts



Ryan Starkweather Emerald

Saturday market goes relax on the lawn near the food and craft booths. The market is the nation's oldest open-air market.

By Joe Walsh
Oregon Daily Emerald

It's become a ritual. Every Saturday, Eugene resident Lucas Gibbons waits in line for as long as a half-hour, just to eat lunch. It's the same lunch every time, but he can't help but come back again and again for that delicious Pad Thai from the Bangkok Grill food booth at the Saturday Market.

"It's like the least nutritious thing here, and yet it's the most popular," Gibbons said of the rice and noodle dish.

Gibbons, a Lane Community College freshman studying culinary arts, has been eating at Bangkok Grill for about six years now. It's one of the most popular food booths at the weekly market, regularly drawing so many customers that the line stretches all the way across the food booth area.

"They must put something in it," Gibbons said. "It's kind of weird."

The Bangkok Grill is one of 20 food booths at Eugene's Saturday Market, located at Eighth Avenue and Oak Street in downtown Eugene. The market has fed and entertained locals for the past 31 years, making it the oldest weekly open-air festival in the United States.

Gil Dunaway, a local candle-maker and vendor, has been there since opening day in 1970.

"The market has improved every year," he said.

Dunaway, the founder of Small World Candles, works 12-hour days making his colorful scented candles that he sells for \$5 - \$25. With small crescent moons on the sides that glow in the dark, the candles are very popular, so much so that Dunaway has made his living selling them primarily at the Saturday Market for the past three decades.

Dunaway is one of about 300

local vendors who sell fine hand-crafts at the market every week where "the maker is always the seller." With so many vendors, shoppers can buy anything from bongo drums to tie-dyed underwear. Beads, jewelry, hemp, organic vegetables, ceramics and clothes are just a few of the hundreds of goods available.

The market also provides endless entertainment, with everything from a tarot card reading booth to a prayer booth. Besides the entertainment provided by belly dancing, poetry reading, hackysacking and bongo-playing patrons, the market offers on-stage concerts by local and regional artists. Among the stage performances last weekend were a roots reggae band, a Cascadian folk duo and a solo guitarist.

There's really no better way to experience the city of Eugene than to simply spend a day at the Saturday Market. In just a few wooded blocks, the market encompasses all that is Eugene.

"It's a good place to get a glimpse into what Eugene's really all about," said Kim Still, Saturday Market's assistant manager. "You really see people of all kinds and get a good sense of what a community-minded place Eugene is."

For Still, it's difficult to describe the market with mere words.

"There's so much," she said. "It's hard to really prepare somebody for the experience. Most people just have a lot of fun being there."

Eugene's Saturday Market takes place every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The market season runs from April through November. This weekend's stage entertainment includes juggler Tim Miller, acoustic folk-rocker Craig Sorseth, guitarist John Twist, eclectic ethnic band Cinq à Sept and bluegrass band Roundhouse. For more information, call 686-8885.



Ryan Starkweather Emerald

Vendors entertain potential customers at the Saturday Market last weekend.

It's a good place to get a glimpse into what Eugene's really all about.

Kim Still
Saturday Market
assistant manager

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