

Social stew brews at market

■ Saturday Market attracts a mixed crowd with rare wares, mouth-watering food and warm atmosphere

By Kristina Johnson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Stale donuts. TV. A trip to the mall.

In towns across America, these are the trademarks of Saturday. Not in Eugene.

Starting at sunrise each Saturday from April through November, artists, cooks, musicians and farmers stream into Eugene's park at Eighth Avenue and Oak Street to carefully arrange their handmade toys, beads and basil for Saturday Market, the oldest continually operating outdoor market in the United States.

"It's a market and a festival combined," said Beth Little, a former vendor who now manages the market.

Saturday Market was conceived 30 years ago, when local potter Lotte Streisinger visited a Peruvian plaza market and decided that Eugene could use something similar. In May 1970, a handful of local artists and farmers gathered together and braved the rain to sell their wares in an alley off Oak Street.

Since then, the market has grown out of the alley and into its current location, which better accommodates the 300 vendors who set up shop every Saturday. Though Saturday Market now serves as a model for markets in Portland, Bend, Hood River and Ashland, it has maintained its original mission of providing a celebration for the Eugene community and a venue for local artisans. Crafts at the market can only be sold by their maker or a family member.

"We're not a flea market, an antique show or an import market," said Little. "We stand by the idea that the maker is the seller."

Vendor Kimberly Godsey said her entire family helps create the Native American crafts she sells at her market booth.

"When we gather sage for smudge sticks, we do it as a family," she said, while spinning wool on a wooden spindle. "My boys help put the rocks in the rattles, and my 14-year-old watches the booth when I need a break. I'm a stay-at-home mom, and this puts groceries on the table."

Michelle Gay, also a stay-at-home mom, is wrapping up her first season selling at the market.

"I was going to have to go back to work to make extra money," she said.



Azle Malinao-Alvarez Emerald

Visitors to the Saturday Market in downtown Eugene will find crafts, such as those above, handmade jewelry and a plethora of other goodies.

Instead, she and her husband, a welder, decided to try their hands at selling garden art. Gay designs and cuts the metal for their sculptures and garden gates. Her husband welds the pieces and watches the kids on Saturday while she works the booth.

"For a first-time product maker, this is a great opportunity to see if your products are going to sell."

said Gay. "It's an incredible feeling when people buy something you made."

Gay said she was apprehensive about joining the market at first.

"I was a little nervous because Saturday Market has this image of being just hippies," she said. "But there are schoolteachers selling

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