Health care detective work at Golf Club

Golfers get a chance to be health sleuths in Santiam

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SPECIAL TO THE STAYTON MAIL

Golfers will get a chance to be health sleuths when Santiam Hospital presents the first Un-Murder Mystery Golf Tournament on Saturday, Sept. 23. The eighteen-hole, four-person scramble will be held at the Santiam Golf Club. Hunt for clues on the course for a chance to win prizes.

Those who register individually be matched with other players.

The cost is $50 per person, which includes golf, a cart, lunch and one drink ticket.

A lunch of pulled pork sandwiches, side salads and dessert will be served at 1:30 p.m. in the banquet room.

"This is basically a community awareness event, kind of like our fun run," Event Assistant Diana Miller said.

"People can learn about symptoms, who to ask or see, resources, that kind of thing." Check-in/registration begins at 7:30 a.m. and the tournament starts at 9.

To register, go to http://www.wvi.com/~dnielson/forms/HospitalGolfTournament.pdf.

Santiam Golf Club is located at 8724 Golf Club Rd., Aumsville.

For more information, contact Lauren Benjamin at 503-769-3485.

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JUSTIN MUCH / THE STAYTON MAIL

Beer

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Hops: from pillows to pilsners

Early Oregon farmers rarely grew hops for beer.

In the 1800s, before Goschies began growing hops, fresh cones were stuffed into pillowcases to lull children to sleep, used as an antibacterial agent in soap, and served as a homegrown antidepressant.

But as beer popularized, so did hops, and harvests became larger and larger. The Goschie family started growing hops commercially in 1904. By then, brewers were the customers.

Now that harvest has started at Goschie Farms, employees drive through the hop fields, cutting the "bines," the vines on which hops grow. The full bines fall into a truck trailer for the ride to the harvesting machine.

Farm workers attach full bines to a chain, which carries them through a picking tunnel. Metallic fingers knock the cones onto a conveyor belt, which carries the hops into a new room. The naked bines are tossed aside.

The hops fall onto a mesh platform; underneath, hot air heats a concrete chamber, drying the hops from the bottom. This preserves them, releasing some of oils that smell like fresh basil and olive oil pesto.

All you can see are hops, only hops, as if the entire chamber is filled with them.

Their petals are now like moth's wings, delicate, almost silken. Yellow dust clings to its core, the smell like lemon peel and roasted pine cones. The smell of the oil is herbaceous and sweet. It clings to you the way the smell of Christmas trees and garlands lingers in your living room long after the needles have been swept away.

These are Centennial hops, often called the "super-Cascade." High in alpha acid — the stuff that bitters beer — Centennial hops have a lot of bittering power with distinctive aromas, a quality in American craft brewing hops popularized by the Cascade.

But it took a while for that to become popular. First, a hops geneticist in Corvallis had to fail.

Building the perfect hop

The Cascade hop was created by scientists and farmers in Oregon on behalf of the U.S. government and Big Beer. In the 1930s, as prohibition loomed, the USDA and Oregon State University developed a small hops genetics program to develop new pest-and-mildew resistant varieties of hops.

After prohibition, big brewing companies like Anheuser-Busch and Miller-Coors grew to a point where they were willing to fund research to create more "efficient" hops. These "macrobreweries" began funding research to develop better alpha hops, also known as bittering hops, with high percentages of alpha acid. The goal: fewer hops that could bitter more beer.

Oregon's climate was always a little too wet for heavy alpha varieties, which eventually pushed Washington into the lead of hop production. Oregon's golden age of development started to dwindle.

In 1965, OSU hop geneticist Alfred Haunold joined the team as a research geneticist. He slowly started to pursue a hop that would be rich in citrus notes, like a bittering hop, but moderate in alpha acid. Haunold revived a forgotten Fuggle variety cross from 1956, which he didn't release until the 1970s. He named the hop "Cascade."

"There is no craft brewing. Even like the early '70s guys in California, they have no influence on the market," says Tiah Edmunson-Morton, director of the Oregon Hops and Brewing Archives and OSU professor. "So these macrobrewers are looking for... something that Cascade was not."

Those macrobrewers looked to Washington companies for a replacement, and Haunold tried to figure out what to do with his Cascade hop. It was about to go out of production when a handful of small brewers – Widmer Brothers in Portland, Sierra Nevada in California – discovered the rejected Cascade.

These craft brewers knew Cascade was going to change the game.

"Once Cascade was released for sure, Haunold makes more crosses, more releases, and that's where you get Willamette, that's where you get Nugget," Edmunson-Morton said. "Mt. Hood, all the hops that are named after various areas of Oregon."

These early craft brewers saved the Cascade hop, making it one of the most popular IPA hops on the West Coast. By the time Haunold retired in 1995, craft brewers were closely following what came comes out of OSU. In particular, a small hop broker wanted in on the new wave of aroma hops.

The new golden age

On a long, boardroom-style table in the office of Goschie Farms , small piles of dried and fresh hop cones lie, waiting to be weighed, ripped and smelled. These early tests will determine which hops get picked first, after the Centennials. Some varieties are OSU alums: Willamette and Santiam. The latter is a Cascade descendant, rising in popularity across the country.

Two varieties don't yet have names; Goschie was contracted to grow new, not-yet-released varieties. Most of the details are off-limits: The world of hop development is more competitive than ever, with a new goal on the forefront.

As craft beer popularized at the end of the 20th century, aroma hops entered their Renaissance: The varieties of hops and their distinct notes became an increasing interest for brewers.

"Because it's more of an aromatic aroma aspect of the hops, variety plays a very important role," said Tom Shellhammer, professor of food science at Oregon State University. "They're kind of analogous to flowers, you know?"

As the USDA's funding and focus on hop development began to dissipate at the turn of the century, a new interest came from the private sector. In 2010, Indie Hops , a hop processing company and distributor, gave OSU $1 million to create the new Aroma Hop Breeding Program, to develop and perfect the cultivation and distinctive notes of aroma hops.

Shaun Townsend, a professor at OSU and hop breeder through the Aroma Hop Breeding Program, joined the team soon afterward. Townshend still pays attention to adaptability — breeding hops that work well in Oregon's wet climate — but he also focuses on those essential oils inside a hop: The aromas that brewers now seek out, everything from lavender to tangerine. And the Cascade hop remains a parent to several new varieties, rising in popularity and still being developed.

Goschie said that the demand for new and varied beer has translated into a desire for more and more styles of hops, forcing many farmers to develop their own versions or buy the rights to grow new and unusual types. Goschie grows around 10 varieties of hops, but she also grows test varieties for various breeders around the area.

"The beer consumer has been so spoiled with these brewers continually making new things," Goschie says. "You've developed a monster. The consumer is never sated."

The farmer walks away from the piles of now-dry hops and heads to a whiteboard. On it, a long list of breweries are sorted by date: "8/18: 54 40, Ex Novo, Base Camp, Pyramid." She adds a new beer to the list, between Deschutes and Montavilla.

When these hops are gone, she'll fill the whiteboard again, variety after variety, until all the hops are gone. The rattle of hop cones will fade until next season, just as it has for generations.

Hops: what you should know

Hops bitter beer. Little pine-cone-looking buds, hops contain something called "alpha acid," which makes beer bitter. Large-scale brewers look for hops with lots of alpha acid, because it means they have to buy fewer hops.

Originally, hops were the ingredient that kept beer fresh. "Before hops, brewers were adding all sorts of botanicals to make beer," says Tom Shellhammer, professor of food science at Oregon State University. "One of those things were hops, and people started to notice that the hops would keep the beer from growing sour; it had a microbial property to it. So people started using hops to keep beer from going bad."

Hops now add aroma — unless they're just used to bitter. Hops contain a core of resin and essential oils, which help beer develop those fruity, vegetal and herbal tasting notes. Low alpha acid hops usually have a wider range of aromas, which is why they're often called "aroma hops."

Aroma hops give beer fresh scents. Aroma hops are responsible for most of the flavor notes in beer, excluding things you associate with baking: chocolate, malt, caramel, yeast. Hop aromas are often related to things that are growing: pine, citrus, mint. Interested in learning more? Randy Mosher's "Tasting Beer" can help you understand and identify those hop characteristics.

Craft brewers often use bittering and aroma hops. This means brewers start by boiling their liquid with a base hop, either something neutral or high alpha and then add aroma hops near the end of the brewing process. If the aroma hops boil too long, those subtleties of flavor disappear.

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