

The *cheese* guy

Marc Bates of Cannon Beach has a lot to share about cheese at a workshop May 30

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arc Bates, aka the Cheese Guy, will present a one-day Introduction to Cheese and Cheese Making Workshop from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 30 at the Cannon

Beach Community Center. Cheese lovers, cheese likers, or even if you're simply curious, Marc Bates is your go-to guy. He's up to date with the latest trends and topics in an ever-growing cheese-consuming world. Be it the basics or the boutiques; American-made or imported; pasteurized or raw, with 45 years of experience in the dairy industry, if it's cheese-related, he's got game.

"Starting out with what the heck is it, why do we make it, and a short history course (short being the operative word — according to a bevy of sources on the Internet, cheese made its first appearance somewhere in Asia between 4,000 and 5,000 years ago when a man on a camel found the milk in his saddle bag had separated), we'll divide cheese into seven categories, which is an industry standard," said Bates about the intro to cheese course. "It's a good number to taste and understand what make cheeses different or similar, what makes different cheeses different colors, and what produces hard or soft textures. Cow's milk, sheep's milk, and goat's milk, and sometimes a mix, there's always something new on the horizon."

If you ask him about buffalo, reindeer, camels and yak's milk — he'll have an answer.

An afternoon of hands-on instruction provides the class with an opportunity to turn milk into curds and whey, and then into cheese. It's a day all mixed together sure to include a few lifetime-spent-with-cheese insider stories scattered throughout. Most of all, it's a unique opportunity to learn from a master.

Bates and cheese were destined. Raised on a dairy farm located between Burlington and Arlington, Washington, he has experienced a lifetime involvement with milk in one capacity or another.

"I went to Washington State University to learn to make cheese. I didn't know that when I went there, but that's what happened," said Bates. His diploma lists a degree in dairy manufacturing — the last of its kind. The following year the same area of



Photo by Joshua Bessex

A pre-salted camembert cheese sits on Marc Bates' table. After salting, the cheese will sit for another 10 to 12 days to form a rind. According to Bates, the taste and texture of the cheese will continue to form over weeks.



Photo by Joshua Bessex

Various cheese-making instruments, including a PH probe and thermometer, sit on a table in Marc Bates' house.

study was renamed and rebranded as a degree in food sciences.

Two years in the food services branch of the U.S. Army followed graduation. Once again, fate was waiting. Bates processed out of the army. A WSU management position in the food sciences department opened up. He applied, was hired and remained for the next 27 years. He went to school learning to make cheese, returning to manage it.

In the late 1930s, way before Bates, the U.S. government and American Can Company funded research at WSU's creamery. The charge was to develop a cheese sealed in a tin can. Cougar Gold, a firm white cheddar with a nutty sharp taste, packed in a 30-ounce round, shallow tin container was the result.

Enter Bates. Norm Thompson, a retail store in Portland contacted Bates at WSU's creamery in the early 1980s. The store wanted to include Cougar Gold in its fledgling holiday food catalog. The rest is history. Bates negotiated the WSU supply, and the store sold it. The award winning cheese,

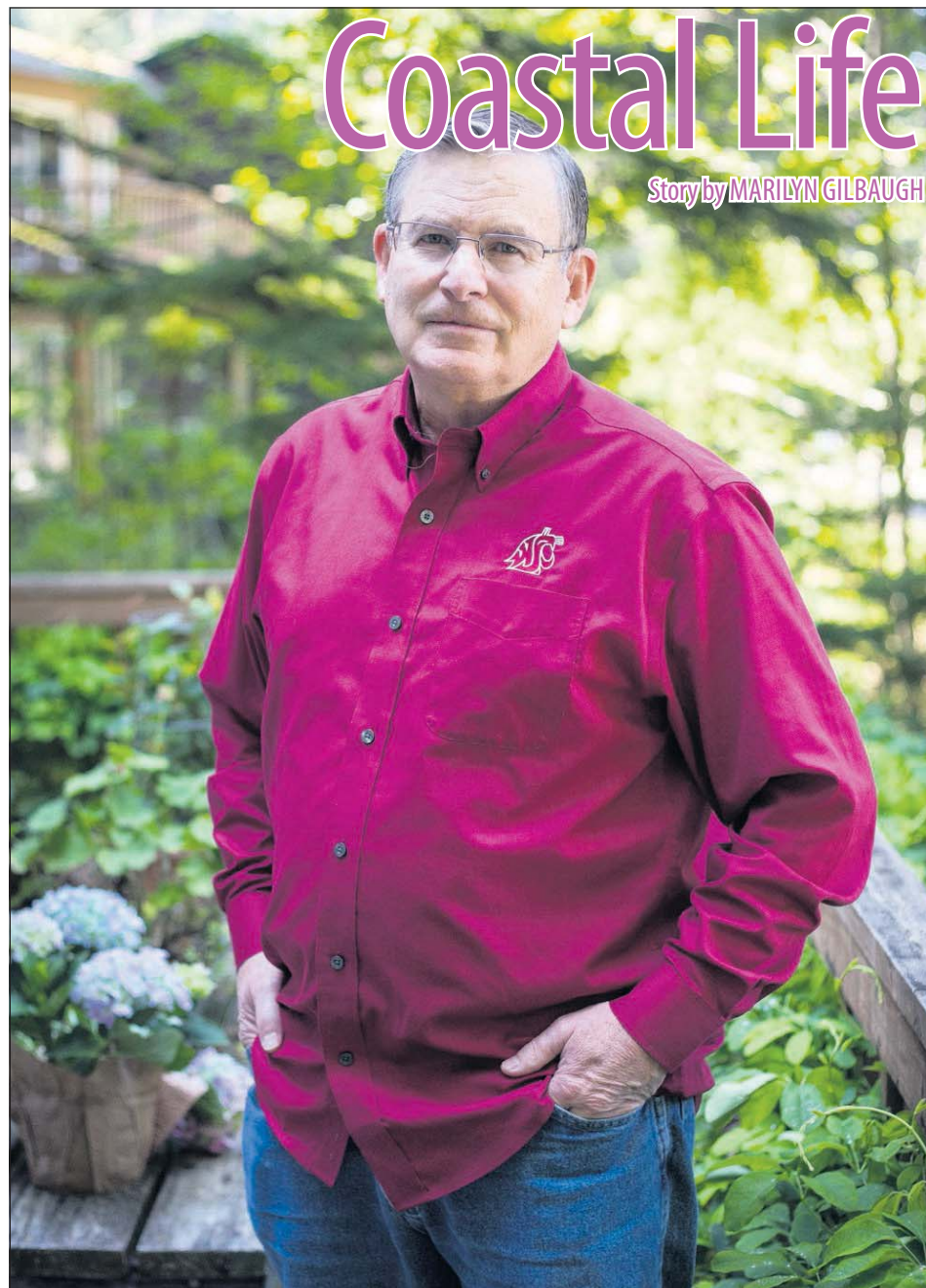


Photo by Joshua Bessex

Marc Bates stands at his home in Cannon Beach.

it's claimed, will last indefinitely when unopened and stored below 70 degrees. And it becomes more flavorful with age. Today, approximately 250,000 tins of assorted cheeses are produced by WSU's creamery. More than 80 percent of them, sold nationwide, are Cougar Gold, each selling for around \$22.

Bates retired — or tried to. Moving to Cannon Beach, his attempt was short lived. The Oregon State University creamery in Corvallis hadn't made cheese for 40 years but was gearing up to go at it again.

OSU Dairy Processing Extension Specialist Lisbeth Goddik heard Bates was in the area. "We talked him out of retirement to have him help us get the start-up right," she said. "We were so fortunate that Marc came and helped us start up the cheese pro-

gram, which produces the Beaver Classic (the friendly, so they say, WSU Cougar Gold competitor). He did a fantastic job. He's wonderful at everything he does. He still helps with short courses at the university, helping artisan cheese makers."

Bates, the man in charge of WSU's Cougar Gold, then OSU's Beaver Classic; it's cheese, fate and Bates. "Collaboration at its finest," added Goddik.

Bates is again trying to re-retire — but slowly. The Introduction to Cheese Workshop will accept 20 students. The cost is \$85. Tickets may be purchased through Eventbrite at <https://eventbrite.com/event/16132150697>. If there are still openings, the cut-off date to sign up is Friday, May 29. Bates may be contacted at cheese-guy@charter.net or at 509-595-8652.