

MILTON-FREEWATER

# Andrea and Jeff Adams are cheese whizzes

The couple hangs their cheese business shingle on Main Street

By AUTUMN ALEXANDER  
For the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — Jeff and Andrea Adams have advice you can take to the bank: Be careful what your kitchen hobbies are.

Almost two decades ago, after their son's dairy cow, Toasty, began producing 12 gallons of milk a day, the family decided "just for fun," to stir up homemade cheese on the stove top. Now, the couple steers a storefront in Milton-Freewater that encompasses a full-fledged artisanal cheese company and more, even as they both continue to work at their original, agricultural professions.

Andrea Adams is a 24-hour, large-animal vet in Walla Walla. Jeff Adams, besides being the full-time cheesemaker, commutes to Hermiston up to three days a week consulting for a dairy-cow replacement farm with thousands of heifers. They're parents of two, now 25 and 27, Brennan and Kalie, respectively, and will celebrate 30 years of marriage this year.

They call their enterprise the Walla Walla Cheese Co., but their shingle hangs on Main Street in more affordable Milton-Freewater. There,



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Walla Walla Cheese Co. owners Andrea and Jeff Adams take a moment June 22, 2022, in the downtown Milton-Freewater storefront and production facility.

behind the gleaming, cool cases and clean-cut, black-and-white tile cafe, delicate and careful chemistry goes on in a commercial kitchen with a few rooms full of specialized equipment and temperature controls.

The factory is not really set up for tours, but private arrangements can be made to see the operation, though much takes place at night just by the nature of the time cheese chemistry takes. The recipes and enzymes they use are from Wisconsin.

With the help of two full-time employees, a couple part-timers and summer interns, there all the craftsmanship occurs, plus curing, cheese cutting, packaging and labeling with the logo

Andrea designed. And then Jeff delivers orders, now to at least 20 different retail outlets and restaurants, in the Walla Walla Valley, Tri-Cities and Pendleton.

The factory's stainless-steel refrigerator cases hold tidy packets of local, grass-fed meats, including goat meat, containers of straight-off-the-farm pasteurized milk, and, of course, weighty wheels of classic cheeses stacked like the 25-pound gold coins they are.

The Adamses share the spotlight, however. Given the wine tourists who come, they have a convenient case of imported cheeses for those who want brie and other oozy cheeses too. The store also makes up charcuterie boards.

Though the cheese company is a locovore's dream, the Adamses do ship cheese ordered from their website. Very carefully, and very cold, Jeff underscores.

And no guest's gaze can help but flirt with flights of freshly made ice cream, a frozen concoction Jeff considers "fast" compared to cheese making. He admits he has a fast-moving mind and welcomes thinking during the open moments that cheese making and driving to and from his consultant work requires.

A not-unusual night for Jeff Adams is pasteurizing milk at the factory at 1:30 a.m., doing record keeping until 6:30 a.m., when he puts the cheese enzymes in, waiting

to cut the curd of the binding milk around 7:30 a.m., and then hooping the cheese.

"Hooping," he explained, "is an old-world term for packing soft curds into cheese-cloth lined molds that bind the cheese. Hooping in turn drains the whey, the excess milky water after cheese comes together. Sometimes this happens in round forms that drain, or in these big blocks we press under weights.

"We learned the hard way with the round molds and gouda," Andrea Jones said. "You need to flip the cheese like a pancake while it's processing itself, or it sticks; you can't get it loose and out of the mold. We've had our share of 'chicken cheese.' We experiment, so the worst thing that can happen is chicken cheese. That's when a batch flops. It goes to the hens."

Ten years ago, the couple went to intensive seminars at Washington State University and at Oregon State University on making artisanal cheeses. Plus working for a decade on a dairy farm in Tillamook provided them a whole network to talk to and gain experience from.

"We learned the science, the pH, food safety, all the basics of an artisanal cheese," Andrea Adams said. "We were inspired to try to make Greek halloumi, for example."

They also mentioned "terroir" influencing their cheese. The term usually is associated with wine and

refers to the complete natural environment that contributes to how a wine tastes. For cheese, Jeff Adams said, it's the grass their cows eat.

"You can see the cheese change color depending on what time of year the grass is in," he said. "We partner with the last family dairy farm in the Walla Walla Valley, Creamline Dairy, just west of us. It's Jersey milk. The fat and protein are higher than Holsteins', especially this time of year."

They have experience with big cheese making in Tillamook, Jeff Adams said, where all the cheese has to taste the same.

"Nothing against Tillamook; it's great cheese," he said. "Our cheese costs a bit more. It's not for everyone. Still, we have all the traffic to the store and demand we can handle."

Jeff Adams said he has dreamed up at least 30 flavors of cheese during the 17 years in the cheese making business. The hot item now is fresh cheese curds.

"We sell up to 1,000 pounds of them a week, locally and as far as Kennewick and Pendleton," he said.

As for Walla Walla Cheese Co.'s next steps, he said while this pays its way, it's not a living, though they are evolving.

"Our question is how far do you grow it?," Andrea Jones said. "I think if we'd tried to plan this, it wouldn't have worked out."

## ATV rollover near Ukiah requires search and rescue

East Oregonian

UKIAH — An all-terrain vehicle crash Friday, Aug. 12, near Ukiah resulted in one person suffering serious injuries and requiring an emergency helicopter flight.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office reported the county dispatch center that day at 9 a.m. received an emergency notification through Garmin Inreach of an ATV rollover with injuries in an area near Ukiah.

Two passengers were injured, the sheriff's office reported, one with minor injuries and the other was a woman who suffered serious injuries to her legs and hips.

Umatilla County Search and Rescue responded and located the woman on the Frazier Creek Trail within the Winom Fraizer OHV Recreation Area, Ukiah.

Rescuers placed her in a litter and carried her out by hand on a narrow ATV trail



Capt. Sterrin Ward/Umatilla County Sheriff's Office

Rescuers on Friday, Aug. 12, 2022 near Ukiah, load a woman into an emergency helicopter after she suffered serious injuries from an all-terrain vehicle crash.

for a little more than half a mile. A six-person team rotated in the effort and placed her in the back seat of a U.S. Forest Service engine that had backed up a very narrow old logging spur that intersected with the ATV trail.

The Forest Service vehicle took her to the helicopter landing zone, which flew her out.

The sheriff's office reported it worked with

several agencies and individuals in this effort, including U.S. Forest Service crews and Forest Service law enforcement, Pendleton Fire & Ambulance Service and independent ATV operators.

For more information on the volunteer Umatilla County Search and Rescue Foundation, including how to join and/or donate, visit [www.umasar-foundation.org](http://www.umasar-foundation.org).

## Irrigon welcomes business boom

By JOHN TILLMAN  
East Oregonian

IRRIGON — Business is back to booming in Irrigon. Premises have opened up or are under construction and older establishments enjoy new management. Supply chain issues however have slowed down some startups.

"Going from east to west for new businesses in town, let's start with Family Dollar Store," City Manager Aaron Palmquist said. "It's coming in and under construction. Dollar Tree is a separate entity."

On the south side of North Main Avenue is a fruit stand, across from A. C. Houghton Elementary School. At 810 N.E. Main Ave., the new Garden Family Restaurant serves Tex-Mex food.

"It's doing great," Palmquist reported. "Part of the code allows living beside businesses. It's exciting to have here, just off the highway."

Java Junkies cafe lies a bit farther west along Highway 730 at Division Road.

"It's a franchise with the one in Umatilla," Palmquist said. "They're a great group of young ladies. West of them is a Latino restaurant with great people, food and prices."

Taqueria Dona Mary is at 490 N.E. Main Ave., near the Irrigon Minimart.

"The Minimart is putting in a 76 gas station," Palmquist said, "but the supply chain has been a challenge. They're still waiting for storage tanks to arrive."

El Primo Mexican Grill is at Fourth Street and Highway 730.

"It was Sergio's, but is now under new ownership," Palmquist said. "Maria is a great cook. It's primarily Mexican cuisine, but with American food for breakfast. They accommodate a variety of tastes and are doing excellently."

To the west lies the Irrigon Store, consisting of a Circle K and Shell station. The Rustic Truck Bar and Grill, a Pacific Northwestern restaurant, is at 100 W. Highway 730, across South First Street from the Bank of Eastern Oregon. On the other side of the highway is the Dollar General.

"Also on the north side of 730 is the Irrigon Medical Clinic, near the new county building," Palmquist said, with the Irrigon Boardman Emergency Assistance Center, 290 N.E. Main Ave.

Other new businesses include home workers, such as trucking delivery dispatchers, Palmquist noted.

"This is an exciting development," he said, "but for security reasons I can't say where they are located."

And major developments are coming, Palmquist said. Oregon's U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley recently announced federal appropriations included \$1 million for Irrigon's business opportunity incubator.

"It's to help low-income and underserved community members set up shops."

The federal dollars are to fund construction of an approximately 10,000 square foot facility with a certified kitchen and space for multiple uses, including distribution, manufacturing and warehousing. It would allow a variety of small areas, with flexibility to house office space and restrooms.

"For 10 to 15 years, Irrigon has wanted a certified kitchen," Palmquist said. "The city will help set it up, then rent it out and use it to sell products or send food to schools."

The new facility is to be built where old, now-demolished vacation rental cabins stood on the south side of the highway. Construction could start in the spring.

"Besides the federal funds, Irrigon also is getting \$250,000 from the Port of Morrow to conduct engineering and planning for the incubation center," Palmquist concluded. "We work cooperatively for business development here."

### LOCAL BRIEFING

#### M-F police investigating Saturday shooting

MILTON-FREEWATER — Milton-Freewater police are investigating a possible gang-related shooting from Saturday night, Aug. 13, that left bullet holes in two vehicles outside the city's Community Building.

"The investigation is ongoing," Milton-Freewater Police Chief Boedigheimer, Doug reported.

According to Boedigheimer, the city's dispatch center at 10:06 p.m. received a call reporting multiple gunshots fired near the Community Building, 109 N.E. Fifth Ave. The city rents the facility for various private events and activities, and on this date a family was holding a large wedding there.

Officers arrived at 10:12 p.m. and found bullets hit two vehicles, but no people were injured.

Police collected several items of evidence, including shell casings and a bullet that was lodged in a vehicle. The department stated it would submit this for foren-

sic analysis and evaluation. "Two persons of interest are known," according to Boedigheimer, "and the incident is possibly gang related."

#### Boardman seeks city council candidates

BOARDMAN — Boardman is looking to fill two vacancies on its city council.

The Boardman Clerk's Office announced the city needs to fill the seat Katy Norton left when she resigned July 12 due to moving away from the area. And Paul Beagle's resignation July 15 for personal issues created the second opening on the council. The city council accepted both resignations at its Aug. 2 meeting.

Both terms expire Dec. 31, 2024. The Boardman City Council is seeking letters of interest from individuals willing to be considered for appointment to fill the vacancies. Anyone interested must have resided in the city of Boardman during the 12 months immediately preceding the appointment and be a registered voter, according to the announcement from the

Boardman Clerk's Office.

Letters of interest must be received no later than 5 p.m. Aug. 24 to City Manager Karen Pettigrew at Boardman City Hall for consideration. The city council will interview the candidates, and appoint the new councilors at the Sept. 6 council meeting.

In a related matter, the filing deadline for residents in Boardman seeking office in the November election is 5 p.m. Aug. 30.

The clerk's office reported the city council has three positions open in the election with terms ending Dec. 31, 2026. Candidates must be at least 18 years old, reside within the city limits and have lived within the city limits 12 months immediately preceding election day and be a registered voter no less than 20 days immediately preceding the election.

Residents who wish to file for city council can obtain filing packets Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at Boardman City Hall.

For more information on local filing, call the clerk's office at 541-481-9252 or visit [sos.oregon.gov/voting-elections](http://sos.oregon.gov/voting-elections).

—EO Media group

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