

Elkton wine tour mixes two local favorites



PHOTO BY NICK SNYDER/CG SENTINEL

Cyclists head to the next winery at the Wine About Your Bike wine bike tour in Elkton.

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The Oregon economy has gone through many changes over the years, but one constant in its modern history is agriculture and fitness or, in this specific case, wine and cycling.

On Saturday, August 17 the Elkton Community Education Center [ECEC] put on their second annual Wine About Your Bike event. Around 25 attendees bought their tickets online - or in person for latecomers - and headed to scenic Elkton to hop on their bicycles and enjoy wines from four different local wineries.

"Wine and cycling, what's not to love?" said one attendee who came all the way from Salem and summarized the simple pleasure of enjoying two of Oregon's most popular industries simultaneously.

This was just the second year of the still-growing event, but organizers were very pleased with their results so far.

"Last year, we weren't really sure what to expect," said Katie Debonis who, along with Hannah Sperandio, were the key organizers and planners of the event. "We kind of threw it together. Well, I hate to say threw it together, but it was more last-minute planning than this year. We were like, 'if we have five people, it's a success' and we ended up with 25 people so that was great."

"We were trying to think of events on a larger scale to draw tourism to Elkton ... so it was like 'what else can we do? Oh, a bike ride and incorporate wine!' so it just came together like that."

For those who find the idea of combining alcohol and cycling a little intimidating, Elkton provides ideal size and geography for this kind of event as the longest route was a mere 16 miles while also covering every stop on the tour.

"I think it's brilliant," said ECEC coordinator Marjory Hamann, "because there are wine bike tours out there and they're often fifty miles rolling through bike country and

there are a lot of people that think, 'Oh that sounds beautiful, but daunting' so this is just a really sweet ride. People can get on their bikes and enjoy wine and at the end of it feel like, 'yeah, I did a wine bike tour, that's right!'"

"And I will say that the route here is planned really well. You start at the farthest out winery and by the time you've done a tasting, you're in town. So you could be walking your bike if you need to," Hamann continued, alluding to the possibility that participants may enjoy themselves a little too much before making it back to the starting point at the ECEC.

"We do offer a shuttle service for people, their wine and their bikes if they need it," added DeBonis.

As with so many events in Elkton, the end result went beyond the activities themselves and became a testament to the ability and passion of Elkton residents to come together and bring vibrancy to a rural community in a way that many other similar areas in America have been unable to accomplish.

"I love that all the local businesses coordinate and cooperate. There are so many events down here in the summer and they're impressive events," said Jenny Peddicord, a Portland resident whose whole family came down for the event.

"I think being a rural community that's one of the things we find with newer events is that it does take awhile to get that traction ... here it's a combination of word of mouth and maybe a few of the right people coming and deciding it's really good then bringing more people next year," said Hamann. "It's got kind of a slow boil to it in terms of new events taking off so there's a certain amount of patience and ingenuity, then waiting for the right combination of people saying, 'next year, let's plan around that and make sure we get to Elkton.'"

Participants paid \$25 per ticket if purchased before July 31, and \$30 if purchased after. Included in the ticket were wine tastings at all participating wineries, a commemorative water bottle, a morning yoga session to kick off the event, a free coffee at the ECEC's Outpost Cafe and a complimentary scoop of ice cream at Elkton's Farm Pickins Mercantile. After the cycling and wine tastings were completed, attendees were treated to a free concert by Cottage Grove's own Windy Ridge band.



PHOTO BY NICK SNYDER/CG SENTINEL

After wine tasting, cyclists were treated to a performance by Cottage Grove's Windy Ridge band.

Heritage from B1



PHOTO BY NICK SNYDER/CG SENTINEL

A crowd looks on at the Lumberjack Show.

nians' childhoods, but sees these ongoing fairs as a way to reconnect with the past.

"Seeing what the fair used to be like," said Garboden when asked what he hopes attendees can learn from this event. "This is what most fairs used to be like. I remember when I was a little kid in the 50s, we went to the county fair up in Deschutes county and Lane county was a little bigger, but it was basically like this. You'd look at the tractors, see a show on the stage, look at the little critters. It was really a fair and you enjoyed it."

Based on the number of cars jammed into the fairgrounds parking lot, Cottage Grove's own celebration of past industries and skills was enjoyed by many and fairs like these may also provide an opportunity to reinvigorate things that may have seemed lost.

"Today's society is so bent on sending kids to college and there's not enough in the trade schools, farm-

ing or agriculture so they come here and they see something, another option, and maybe they get an interest in it," said Patrick Dearth, an event volunteer from Creswell.

Garboden also sees opportunity in events like these.

"You learn common sense and a sense of duty because, you know, the 4-H critters gotta be fed every day and taken care of. And when you go in the woods, like the loggers, you gotta be careful. Some of them weren't and they got brought back in a bag, but it's a skill. People think, 'well, anyone can cut a tree down with a saw,' but you can't. It's a skill that takes care and patience."

It may be a celebration of the past, but the skills and crafts on exhibit provide the younger generations with ample learning opportunities, giving them potential tools for their future endeavors regardless of specific trade.

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