

# Caterers-turned-camp-cooks keep firefighters full

They cook at fire scenes, 'but never one this size'

By Nancy McCarthy  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — They started out of the back of a pick-up truck with a tent and a camp stove.

Now, Bill and Janet Robertson make almost 700 meals a day and pack 1,100 lunches to feed the firefighters fighting the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

The former owners of the Outpost restaurant usually cater events with 150 to 300 guests. The hours are pretty normal.

But during fire season — and the past 20 years of fire seasons — that “normal” life comes to a halt.

“We get up at 2 or 3 a.m., and we’re working until 11 or 12 at night,” said Janet. “Some days, we don’t get any sleep at all.”

They have cooked at plenty of fire scenes, she said.

“But never one this size.”

They’re getting help from local businesses. Chester’s Thriftway makes donuts every morning. The Outpost helps out with some of the



About 1,100 bagged lunches are prepared for firefighters battling the Canyon Creek Complex fire. Ten percent of the lunches are vegetarian.

Eagle photos/Nancy McCarthy

cooking. It’s a way to keep money in the community, Janet said.

Most of the food, however, comes from Sysco. A truck delivers products every day.

Then comes the preparation: Provide breakfast from

5 to 9 a.m. Pack lunches (10 percent are vegetarian) before noon. Serve dinner from 5 to 11 p.m.

And feed the firefighters they do. Breakfasts consist of bacon and eggs, hash-browns, biscuits and gravy.

For dinner, they offer bar-

bequed steak, pot roast, fried chicken, pork chops, a full salad bar and a full dessert bar.

The firefighters deserve good meals, Janet said.

“They work very hard and long hours. They’re in danger working to save our properties.”

The work is a family affair, said Bill, who pointed to his granddaughter, grandson and daughter, all working on various chores at the east end of the Pavilion, where the Robertsons have set up shop.

“We just came off two



All lined up and ready to go, these lunch bags are prepared by Bill and Janet Robertson and their assistants for firefighters assigned to the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

other fires — Murderers Creek for five days and a 24-hour contract all night at Beulah Reservoir.”

The Robertsons get to know some of the firefighters, who come from all over the United States. Sometimes they see them another year on another fire.

Despite the long hours and encounters with rattlesnakes and cougars in some camps, Bill said he enjoys the experience.

“We love it,” he said. “We try to make it fun. It’s all about the firefighters. They’re away from home. We try to make it comfortable for them.”

**ATTENTION GRANT COUNTY VETERANS:**

Did you know there may be VA benefits available for you as a result of your spouses' military service?

See your Grant County Veteran Services Officer today for more information, located at Grant County Court House.

**\* Call 541-575-1631 for an appointment \***

Open: Mon., Wed., & Fri. 10 am - 4 pm. Appointment available at other times.



Mark and Brenda Bagett lost their home to the devastating Canyon Creek Complex Fire. They were able to save their dogs and few personal belongings before fleeing the mountain. They opened the gates for the horses and hoped for the best. The horses, Cricket and Penny, survived and were rescued after the fire burned through, but their house was a total loss. Mark's father, Bob Bagett, right, and their son-in-law, Josh Walker, left, helped catch the horses when they were able to return to their property.

**MARCIEL**  
Well Drilling & Pumps

Call for a **FREE Estimate!**

**John Marciel**  
541-932-4334

WWC#1606 • CCB#156965 • CPI#101 02516

**FACEBOOKERS:**  
Become an Eagle fan today!

Go to:  
[facebook.com/MyEagleNews](https://www.facebook.com/MyEagleNews)



Mt. View Mini Mart in Prairie City boasts a big and colorful “Thank you.”



Smoke from the Canyon Creek Complex fire billows high into the sky above emergency vehicles on Highway 395, in this photo by Koby Essex.

**Best Fishing PHOTO CONTEST**

With two chances to win weekly or grand prize!

Go fishing in Grant County, and send in photos from your experience.

**WIN \$10 WEEKLY OR \$100 GRAND PRIZE**

Open to all amateur photographers.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has stocked some big ones in local lakes and waterways this summer. This is your chance to catch supper and maybe win a prize, in the 2015 Best Fishing Photo Contest sponsored by the Blue Mountain Eagle, Boyd Britton Welding and Prairie Springs Fish Farm.

- Photos will be judged for quality, content, viewer appeal. Remember, it's not the biggest fish – but the best fishing photo that takes the prize!
- Photos must be taken this summer in Grant County.
- Digital format is best - e-mail to [kristina@bmeagle.com](mailto:kristina@bmeagle.com) or bring in a disc to the Eagle office, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day.
- Deadline for submissions: **Sept. 21, 2015** for the grand prize.

**Fisherman's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where the fish was caught:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date taken:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fish Species:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Weight & Length** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact phone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact e-mail address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**For more info, call the Eagle, 541-575-0710 – and happy fishing!**

**In the Market for Something Organic?**

Check out our incredible variety of fresh, local and organic foods.

**Grant County Farmers Market**

SW Brent St., John Day  
541-932-2725.

**Every Saturday, now through mid-October**  
8am-noon.  
See you there!

- Fresh fruit
- Baked goods
- Lotions & soaps
- Fresh cut flowers
- Jewelry & other handcrafted items



From David Kilpatrick, outside the Canyon City post office, as smoke from the Canyon Creek Complex billows over Canyon Mountain.