

Locally grown foods featured at OSU dinner

Specialty crops grown in the Columbia Basin make up creative menu

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Staff Writer

Phil Hamm is never one to hold back when it comes to promoting the Columbia Basin as an agricultural powerhouse.

Farmers throughout the region grow more than 200 types of crops, Hamm said, thanks to a unique combination of climate, soils and clean water. The result is a bounty of nutritious vegetables like potatoes, onions and carrots to go along with sweet treats like famous Hermiston watermelons.

All those and more were on the menu Thursday during a special "crop-up" dinner hosted by Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The dinner, which was held at OSU's Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center, featured dishes inspired by local ingredients, meant to

educate and excite the public about what's growing in their own community.

"Just look at the diversity we have here," said Hamm, station director for HAREC. "This is one of the best agricultural production regions in the world."

Thursday marked the third in a series of five crop-up events across the state, and the only one to come to Eastern Oregon. Dinners have already been held in Aurora and Astoria, and two more are slated for Portland and Medford and Aug. 24 and Sept. 13, respectively.

Modeled after the concept of pop-up restaurants, the crop-up series is all about showcasing Oregon-grown specialty fruits, vegetables and tree nuts. Oregon ranks sixth in the nation in specialty crop production, according to ODA. The dinners are meant to help farmers get those products in the hands of consumers.

In order to cook up something unique at each dinner, the OSU Food Innovation Center reaches out to local farms to see what crops are in season and then col-



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Naomi Sanchez, left, with Finley Fresh Produce hands a bag of vegetables to Anna Rademacher at the crop up dinner Thursday at HAREC in Hermiston.

laborates with local chefs. Jason Ball, research chef with the Food Innovation Center, said they teamed up with Walker's Farm Kitchen in Hermiston to prepare each course they served at HAREC.

The meal included fermented potato bread, baked with Yukon Gold potatoes; watermelon from Walchli Farms tossed with fresh cucumber, tomato and mint; a watermelon-infused gazpacho; and beef tenderloin served with corn relish.

Ball said they were expecting about 80 guests, and his team worked behind the scenes in a "kitchen" that was actually a conference room at the station. Still, they pulled together to make it work.

"We're creating a really unique dining experience for people in the area," Ball said. "We're totally flexible. We can get any ingredients and make something we think is pretty tasty."

The goal, Ball said, is to serve up something fresh

that guests haven't seen before, so they will feel inspired to go out support their local farms.

"We have such a good diversity of ingredients," he said. "It's silly to not support local farms and cook with local products."

Outside, guests at HAREC sat at long tables while vendors set up booths to showcase just some of what the region has to offer. When dinner was served, Ball provided a rundown of each course and the crops they used in each creation.

Julia Turner, an international trade manager with ODA, said the crop-up series is meant to be fun and educational. It was supported by the federal Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, which has invested \$2 million in funding projects to boost Oregon's specialty crops.

"We're hoping to teach people a little something about specialty crops and prepare some delicious food so they can taste them firsthand," Turner said.

The event also honored T/7 Ranch, of Haines, as the

inaugural Farm to School Producer of the Year for the area. The Oregon Farm to School Program reimburses schools for purchasing products from local producers, and T/7 has been a major contributor over the years.

Run by Brent and Jeanette Thompson, the ranch has donated beef and potatoes to the nearby North Powder Schools, and also lent their expertise in helping the school of 360 kids build their own garden, growing lettuce, carrots, radish, peppers and more.

"We are a farming community, but not all kids have the opportunity to have hands-on learning of where their food comes from," said Erin Thompson, Farm to School coordinator in North Powder and daughter-in-law to Brent and Jeanette. "A lot of the vegetables will be used in the school itself as part of the lunches."

The Crop-Up Dinner Series and Market Showcase is set to continue next year, with another five events around the state. The locations have not yet been announced.

Remote-controlled aircraft take flight at first Ag Drone Rodeo

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
Staff Writer

Standing on a stage at the first ever Ag Drone Rodeo, organizer Jeff Lorton compared the day's events to those in 1903 at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the site of the first manned flight.

The attendees of Thursday's events were primarily concerned with unmanned flight, as dozens of people from across the state gathered at Ron Linn's airfield east of Stanfield for a series of drone demonstrations focused on agriculture.

Hosted by the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range and Oregon Future Farm, drone manufacturers and vendors like RDO, Insitu and MicaSense flew their UAS. Each company talked about their drone's crop imaging capabilities and ease of use while piloting it on a short mission.

Lorton said unmanned aerial vehicles would be a regular part of farming operations within 10 years and there was one working already on Hill Ranches near Pendleton.

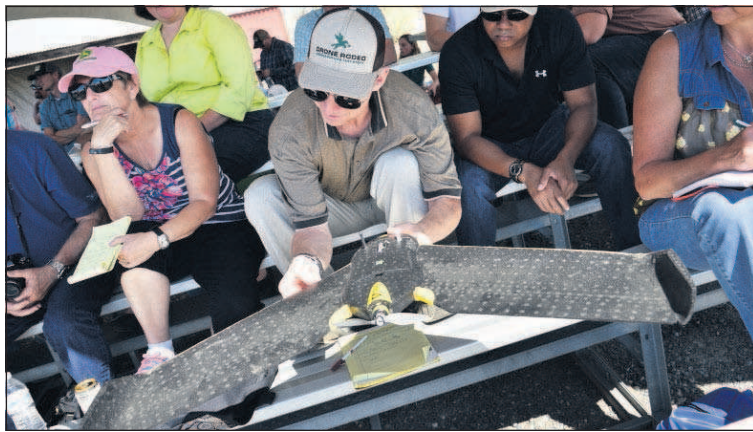
"This drone thing you've heard so much about is a reality," he said.

It's certainly a reality for a group of students at Yamhill-Carlton High School, who are building a drone from scratch.

A Yamhill County farmer commissioned the drone so he could use the unmanned aerial vehicle on his blueberry fields and other crops, Yamhill-Carlton math teacher Jordan Slavish said.

The farmer agreed to pay for half of the cost to build it. A dedicated after-school group of 6-7 students now gets a hands-on experience building their own drone.

Slavish was accompanied by Jeff Breazile and his son Zach, a students working on the drone.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Farmer Forrest Frantz of Hood River gives a close inspection to the Sensefly eBee UAV on Thursday during the Ag Drone Rodeo at Linn Airstrip east of Stanfield.

Breazile, an engineer at Intel, said his employer is covering the expenses of the trip to Eastern Oregon, which the contingent is using as an opportunity to find the software they need to compile agricultural data.

Although many in the agricultural industry see drones as a part of the future of farming, some don't know how quickly it will be integrated.

Todd Thorne, a member of the Pendleton Airport Commission and a former wheat farmer, said he could definitely see drones being used now to help growers of high-value crops like potatoes and tree fruits. But the current cost of investing in a UAS might be too cost prohibitive for a lower-value crop like dryland wheat.

While a quadcopter drone can now be bought for well under \$100, the price tag for many of the professional-grade drones being demonstrated were in the thousands of dollars.

Don Wysocki, a soil scientist with the Umatilla County Oregon

State University Extension Service, concurred with Thorne. He said he saw drone operators leasing out UAS services to farmers rather than growers buying drones of their own.

Phil Hamm, the station director of OSU's Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center, said there's a great deal of potential for farmers.

Hamm said UAS can pinpoint the spots where pests are destroying a crop, allowing the farmer to target that spot rather than blanket a large area with expensive, unnecessary pesticide.

Hamm also thought leasing drone services would probably be the most immediate way UAVs would be integrated into farming.

While he did note that farmers in the Columbia Basin are progressive in their ability to adapt to new technologies, Hamm said drone companies will have to appeal to growers' business sense.

"You have to prove to them that they can save money," he said.

Police: Little tips can be big help in solving crimes, saving lives

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Local business owners learned about ways they can help the police — and the police can, in turn, help them — during a Hermiston Chamber of Commerce Business to Business luncheon Tuesday.

Sgt. Bill Osborne of Hermiston Police Department told the group that the biggest way people can help out the police department is by helping be their eyes and ears.

"The best thing you can do to help keep your community safe is just to tell us," he said. "If you see something, report it."

Osborne said a lot of times people will notice something out of place or have a gut feeling something is wrong, but then end up telling themselves they're being silly and they should just ignore it. But he gave an example of someone who let an officer know they had seen a suspicious person behind a business, and when the officer went to look he discovered several pounds of meth stashed in a garbage can.

"We have solved all sorts of crimes from those little tips," he said.

If there seems to be any immediate danger, he said, call 9-1-1 and report it to a dispatcher. But if the problem is a chronic one or someone is just looking for information they call the front lobby at 541-567-5519, email one of the staff listed on the website or stop by the office.

Osborne said the department does a lot of "preventative maintenance" in the community by just talking to people. Letting some-

one know what they are legally allowed to do in certain circumstances, or helping angry neighbors come to a compromise about a nuisance, which can prevent the situation from escalating into a crime later.

Osborne also shared information about a free training the department offers, called Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (or CRASE), which helps people learn to stay calm and move away from danger in an emergency, especially an active shooter situation.

"This is simply a tool that saves lives," he said.

Osborne said the average police response time in the United States is three minutes. The CRASE training teaches people to act in ways that can help buy them three minutes of safety until police arrive.

He gave the example of a criminal entering a building and opening fire on those inside. Peoples' instinct when they hear gunshots is to run, but often they automatically run to the place they entered the building — straight toward the shooter, in many cases. Training yourself to note where all of the exits are when you enter a building or room can help you move away from danger instead of toward it, Osborne said.

He said the department holds classes from time to time for groups of individual citizens who have expressed an interest. Employers can also contact the department about scheduling a CRASE training at their workplace, or people can request it for their church or other group.

IN BRIEF

Dealerships team up for Hermiston sports

Two local auto dealerships are teaming up to help Hermiston sports programs.

Tom Denchel Ford is bringing the Ford Motor Company's Drive 4 UR School event to Hermiston. Tom Denchel Ford will donate \$20 for every person who test drives a Ford vehicle at Hermiston High School on Saturday, Aug. 27 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Hermiston boys' soccer and football programs have the potential to raise up to \$6,000 for each program.

The soccer program could receive an addi-

tional \$2,000 for eligible test drives on a 2017 Ford Escape, meaning the soccer team could raise up to \$8,000 on Saturday.

Also on Saturday, Hermiston Chrysler Dodge Jeep RAM is will be doing the Gridiron Challenge, with the potential to raise up to \$5,000 for the football program.

Drivers can test a Dodge RAM truck and Hermiston Chrysler Dodge will donate \$20 per test drive in support of the football program.

In order to do a test drive, a person must be 18 years of age or older and have a valid driver's license. Eligible drivers can test both a Ford and Dodge to help both sports

programs.

There is a limit of one test drive for each program per household.

The football team will scrimmage on Saturday, Aug. 27, from 9-11 a.m. at the Kennison Field and a soccer game between Hermiston and Umatilla will be held at 6 p.m.

Infant dies in Stanfield

A month-old Stanfield infant died Thursday, Aug. 18.

Medics from Umatilla County Fire District 1, Hermiston, and the Stanfield quick response team responded to a call

at 11:09 a.m. for an unresponsive infant on the 400 block of East Ball Avenue.

Fire District 1 battalion chief Corey Gorham said the crew worked to resuscitate the child and called the emergency department at Good Shepherd Medical Center for more direction.

The doctor, though, Gorham said, told the first responders there was nothing they could do. The child died at the scene.

"You don't want to go out on those calls," Gorham said.

He said he did not know what caused the death.

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