CHOW

Do *You* Know Where Your Food Comes From?

'Cause Bette Fraser wants to tell you

BY LISA GLICKMAN



YES, THAT IS A WOOD-FIRED OVEN IN THE BACKGROUND.

Bette Fraser cares where your food comes from—it's her job.

Her business, The Well Traveled Fork, covers all aspects of the food scene in Bend from cooking classes to culinary tours to catering. She is personally dedicated to supporting local businesses, farmers and producers of food available right here in Central Oregon.

I made a visit to Fraser's extraordinary kitchen to chat with her about The Well Traveled Fork. I was green with envy of her expansive kitchen and state-of-the-art appliances, not to mention the built-in wood-fired pizza oven, and a center island the size of a small minivan. While we chatted, her 27-year-old African grey parrot, Greystoke, sat nearby frequently saying "hello" and whistling catcalls.

For Fraser, it all started during her time as a teacher at an affluent elementary school in Southern California. She realized that these children, along with some of their parents, seemed clueless about where food actually comes from.

She feared that these children were literally being malnourished on a diet of frozen premade pancakes, packaged peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, processed chicken nuggets and plain pasta with butter and cheese. We commiserated over the invention of the kids menu.

Fraser made it her mission to teach these children the genesis of real food. In the beginning she demonstrated making homemade waffles. Using these kinds of fun opportunities, she taught the kids that healthy food doesn't come from a freezer, a box or a can. She made it her mission to teach that vegetables do, in fact, grow in the ground and animals can be raised on farms by people who actually care about the meat that they produce.

She's brought that same mentality to Central Oregon and has created several tours around the High Desert to help you "meet" your food.

I recently had the pleasure of taking part in her Culinary Secrets tour, which takes guests on a chauffeured trip around town to places where you can sip, nibble and shop at some of the best this city has to offer. Fraser's associate Aliza Rosenstein shuttled our group in a comfortable Chevy Suburban while showing us a slice of Bend's fantastic food, wine and beer culture.

We started by tasting wines at Volcano Vineyard, followed by sampling local brews at GoodLife Brewing and Boneyard Beer. At Oregon Spirit Distillers, we sampled house-made vodka, bourbon and absinthe while watching the distilling and bottling process up close alongside giant vats of bubbling corn mash.

We stopped to shop at the newly opened Locavore store, and later popped into Barrio restaurant to sample a succulent house-made bacon jam made from tender braised pork belly and spices and served on toasted sliced baguette garnished with orange supremes, an orange jalapeno basil sauce and a drizzle of pomegranate molasses.

We ended our tour at Baked Bakery where we were treated to the famous epi roll, a light and fluffy bread topped with poppy seeds and crusty salt. It was absolutely delicious!

Rosenstein was engaging and very informative, telling us about each business and facilitating tours at each destination. A cooler was provided in the back of the Suburban with bottled water and a place to put the goodies we collected. Back in the Suburban, a plate of homemade blondies made from Rain Shadow Organic's whole wheat flour in Terrebone was offered as a special treat. What a great way to spend the day getting local!



SHOP AT LOCAVORE ON FRASER'S CULINARY SECRETS TOUR.



OTHER TOURS OFFERED BY THE WELL TRAVELED FORK

The Farm and Ranch tour allows guests to visit some local farmers and see animals that are treated humanely and sustainably fed. She works with 15 local farms and ranches showing you up close how your food gets from their farms to your fork. While on this tour, you may meet some free-range chickens or make a visit to an alpaca farm and shop for luxurious sweaters made from the sheared fleece of these exotic animals raised here on the High Desert. You'll have an opportunity to talk to the hard-working farmers and ranchers and learn about their day-to-day operations. On average, a local farmer might clear only $12,000-$13,000 a year. Fraser feels it is important we support them as much as we can.

Follow the Fork walking tours allow you to explore some of Bend's best locally owned coffee shops, bakeries, restaurants and specialty food stores. Fraser offers a tour of the westside of Bend and, more recently, has added her downtown walking tour. The routes cover about one and a half flat miles and last about two and a half hours.