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Alumni Profile

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Blogging through lunch

Honkin' Huge Burritos at Pioneer Courthouse Square hooked him.

Brett Burmeister '92, then a Linfield College history major, stumbled across the Portland food cart and was wowed by the big taste and small price tag of a food cart meal. A decade later, as he moved tentatively into the world of blogging, he wrote about things that appealed to him – Portland and food carts.

Now managing editor and primary owner of FoodCartsPortland.com, Burmeister still writes about the big tastes in Portland. Over the last few years, he has watched the local food cart industry explode, while documenting the process and sampling tastes from carts like The People's Pig, Viking Soul Food and the Dump Truck. With some 700 licensed mobile food vendors, Multnomah County boasts more per capita than any city in the nation. According to Burmeister, other cities are using Portland as a model for food carts and urban planning.

But Burmeister doesn't play favorites.

"I have a couple of go-to carts, but I'm all over the place," he said. He is partial to soups in the winter and opts for lighter food during the summer. "Our mission is to promote the food cart scene, not just one or two. We tell their story, instead of saying whether their food is good or bad. We keep it positive. I use my power for good versus evil."

FoodCartsPortland has a loyal following – 40,000 Facebook fans, 10,500 Twitter followers and 5,000 daily website visitors. When Burmeister posts about a cart, owners often report they sell out within the hour.

"There is a lot of passion and skill out there," he added. Owners are independent, and they help each other by sharing supplies and encouragement. "As a small business owner, there are no sick days at the food cart. If they're not open, they don't get paid."

As a Linfield student, Burmeister developed an appreciation for other cultures while studying abroad in Austria. Now he talks with people from a myriad of backgrounds every day, and says his Linfield years taught him sensitivities for dealing with cultural issues.

"What I learned at Linfield helped me get to where I am," he noted, citing traits of his liberal arts education – problem solving, interacting with people, research, critical thinking, writing, communication, accounting and deadline skills. "I truly believe that Linfield taught me how to live. It's made me a more successful individual in all my endeavors and I continue to learn every day."



Brett Burmeister '92, managing editor and owner of FoodCartsPortland.com, blogs about the local food and cart vendors in Portland. One of his favorite parts of the job is meeting the vendors. "Food brings people together," he said.

Burmeister spent 15 years as an engineer and manager in the information technology industry, before joining a new generation of bloggers. He turned his pantry into an office and now works from home, near a window that looks out on his urban chickens.

Burmeister meets regularly with other bloggers, to share ideas about new technologies and ways to monetize the website. Along with advertising revenue, the site has inspired additional food-related writing opportunities for Burmeister.

He encourages others to blog as well.

"If you have a passion about something, start writing," he said. "You may think no one is reading, but people with similar interests will find you. There is someone out there who wants to hear your ideas." 🐜

– Laura Davis