

# LET THE GAMES BEGIN

by KYLA MERWIN CHENEY  
PHOTOGRAPHY by JOSEPH EASTBURN

With football season upon us, I found myself wondering who first thought up the idea of tailgating. Who woke up one morning and said, 'Hey, let's drive our rig to the parking lot, pull out a cooler of beer, slap some dogs on the hibachi and pre-function ourselves into a frenzy?'

As it turns out, the first partisan-based, pep rally/picnic – in America, anyway – can be traced to the Civil War. Stephen Linn, in *The Ultimate Tailgater's Handbook* (Rutledge Hill Press), explains. "Consider the Battle of Bull Run in 1861. Enthusiastic Union supporters from the Washington, D.C. area arrived with



LEFT TO RIGHT: Ducks fans – Hardy Gore, Rick Brittle, Jamie Horton, Greg Brittle, John Graham, Don Sherwood, Kirk Floyd, Marcus Morgan and Mike Hunt – celebrate at Autzen.



# TAILGATING KICKS OFF GAME DAY IN STYLE

baskets of food and shouts of 'Go Big Blue!' to watch the opening battle in America's Civil War. Historians generally agree this was a case of the right idea at the wrong time, war not being a spectator sport. Still, for those who attended, there was socializing and tradition, tension and excitement."

Most legends, however, set modern tailgating firmly in 1869, when the first football game was played between Rutgers and Princeton at New Brunswick, New Jersey (Rutgers 6, Princeton 4, FYI). Fans traveled to the game in carriages and arrived hungry and thirsty. So they collected themselves at the — ahem — "tail" of their horses to

eat, drink and socialize. And thus, a great American tradition was born.

Today, many tailgate parties are elaborate soirées involving RVs, satellite dishes, electric grills, theme menus and super-secret recipes. These are civil wars of a different kind. Ducks v. Beavers ... in high tailgate style.





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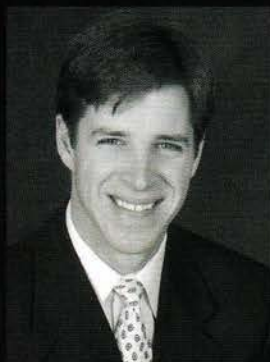
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It's a great chance  
for people to get  
together, to see old  
friends. We're all  
pretty busy, but it's  
guaranteed we'll see  
each other on Game  
Day. Together all in  
one place.

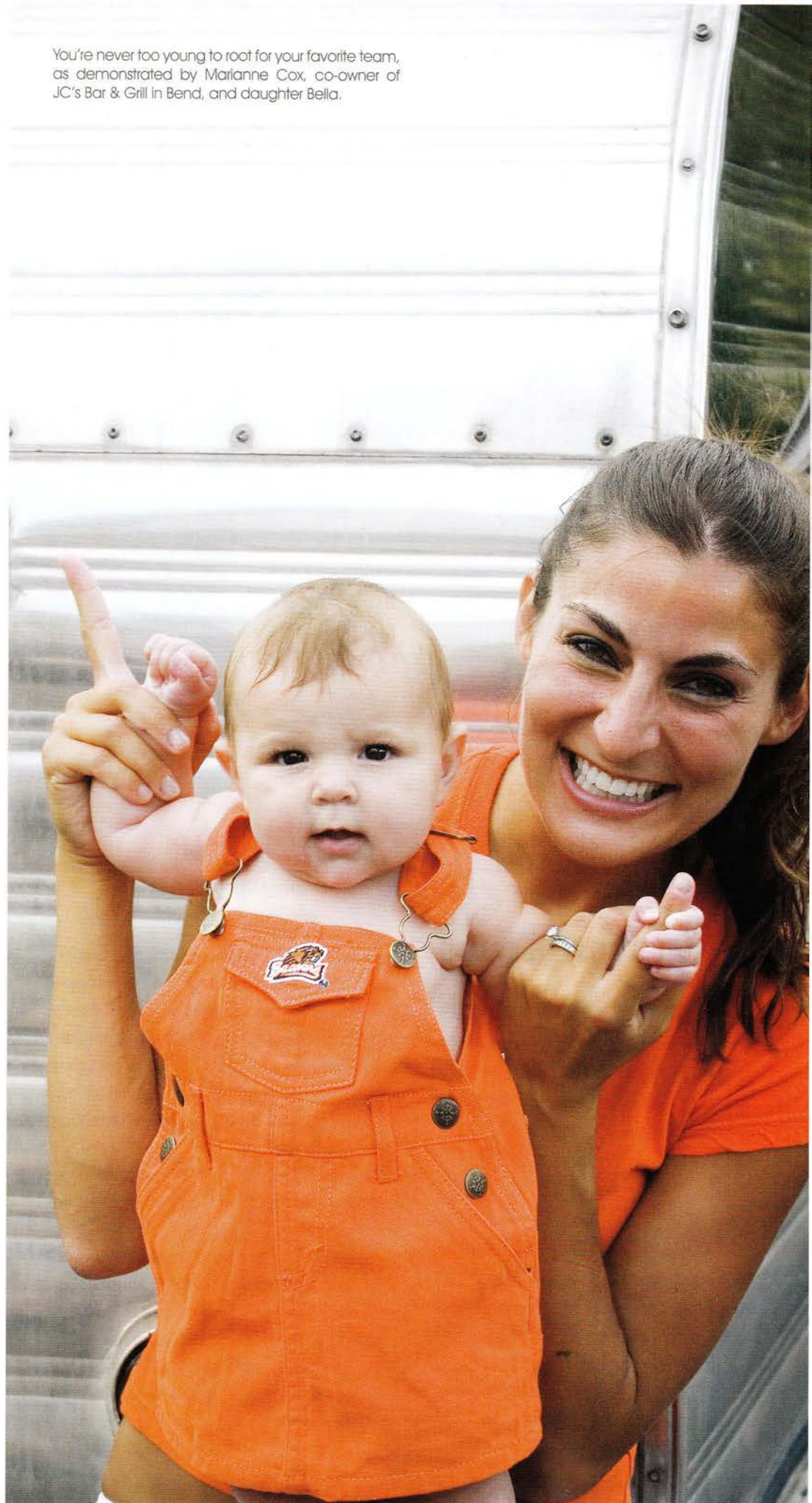
—Chris Cox, co-owner of JC's Bar  
& Grill and Beaver Fan

Joni Nelson, a dedicated Oregon Duck fan, has been traveling to home games at Autzen Stadium for nearly thirty years. "The three main ingredients to successful tailgating," she says, "are friends, food and beverages." Beverages are typically of the "adult" variety and the party starts early. "We get to the stadium by 10am to get a good spot. Then we roll out the Astroturf and the fun starts."

Nelson and her cohorts start preparing for Game Day a week in advance. "I've always tailgated with the same four or five families," says Nelson. "There's always a theme and everything is in our colors." If you wandered onto Nelson's patch of Astroturf, you'd find green and yellow flowers, balloons, cups, plates, chairs and silverware. And clothes, of course. They grill everything from tri-tip to burgers and hotdogs. They serve snacks, salads and side dishes ... and duck-shaped sugar cookies frosted in bright yellow confection, called Quackies.

The party doesn't end with the kick-off, either. "No way, are you kidding?" scoffs

You're never too young to root for your favorite team, as demonstrated by Marianne Cox, co-owner of JC's Bar & Grill in Bend, and daughter Bella.







Dennis Clark from Eugene, Oregon 'cues up some ribs for the pre-function festivities at Autzen.

## LOCAL BOOSTER CLUBS

### CENTRAL OREGON OREGON CLUB

The third largest booster club in the state for University of Oregon athletics. Last year they raised \$230,000 for Oregon athletics and student scholarships. Contact Justin Fisher at the Duck Shop in the Shops at the Old Mill 541/318-9983

### CENTRAL OREGON BEAVER HUDDLE

Money raised from meetings and events goes to the Beaver Athletic Student Fund (BASF). Their signature event, the Civil War Dinner, with silent and live auctions, raised \$21,000 in 2006. Contact: Woody Bennett at 541/322-7000 or 541/317-4879 (evenings).

Nelson. There's the pre-game party, of course, but add to that the in-game party and the post-game party. "No one leaves the parking lot right after the game," says Nelson. "That's the time to pop another one and celebrate." Nelson's traditional post-game recipe is her "Winning Poppers" – a green-hot concoction of peppers, jalapeño cheese and bay shrimp (see recipe on page 125).

"Tailgating is a great way to be part of the college football scene," says Nelson. "At Autzen, everyone's your friend when you get there."

With three sons steeped in Oregon State football, Cindy and Mark Kuykendall became instant Beaver fans and dedicated their weekends – and their cookies – to the team. Bend High graduates, Joe (OSU tight end, 1995-98), Mike (OSU offensive lineman, 1998-2002) and Patrick (OSU equipment manager, 2001) inspired their parents to gather friends

together for the high times and the low times and some high-jinx tailgating.

"During the times when the Beavers weren't winning," says Cindy, "I made a bet [with the players] to bake them cookies if they won. I made 300 cookies nearly every week, for seven years. My husband says I'm the most optimistic person. I believed they were going to win, so I always made cookies."

The Kuykendalls were also prone to practical jokes at their tailgate parties. "My husband and I took it upon ourselves to gather the parents of other football players to tailgate together under a big tent," says Cindy.

She says pranks they've pulled over the years include "a crazy idea" to cook a real duck at a Civil War game and to kidnap the shoes and mascot of one of the moms and making her wear purple to a Huskie game.



Tailgating is a great way to be part of the college football scene ... At Autzen, everyone's your friend when you get there.

—Joni Nelson, Radio Advertising Executive and Duck Fan



TOP: Avid Oregon Duck fan, Joni Nelson, cooks her traditional "Winning Poppers" for post game celebrations. ABOVE: The "Winning Poppers".

"It was a lot of work, but it was a lot of fun," says Cindy. Her ultimate dream: to go and cook meals for the entire football team. "To this day," she says, "There are still players who talk about my cookies."

For those wanting to join the spirit of tailgating here in Central Oregon, JC's Bar and Grill on Franklin Avenue in Bend throws a raucous good time. Chris Cox, co-owner of JC's (with his twin brother Jeremy and wife Marianne) opened JC's in 2003 to be the local "Beavers" Bar.

On Game Day, says Cox, "It's totally crazy. The house will be totally packed, people screaming and giving high fives. It's the next best thing to being at a game."

"They come here because they know every single person in this bar who is a Beaver fan. They have similar interests. We also have a ton of Ducks who come in for Duck games."

Cox describes himself and his family as "definitely hard core Beaver fans." But Ducks are welcome at JC's, too. "We always root for both teams," says Cox, "until the Civil War game, anyway."

Beavers and Ducks flock to JC's, especially on Game Day, because, as Cox puts it, "No one wants to watch a game by yourself. It's not as much fun. You want to enjoy the moment with others... and it wouldn't be as much fun if only Beaver fans came. Duck fans make it more fun."

For the Cox brothers, tailgating was a family tradition from early on. "We've tailgated our whole lives," says Cox. "We were raised Beaver fans and we've tried to carry on the camaraderie of tailgating to JC's. It's a great chance for people to get together, to see old friends. We're all pretty busy, but it's guaranteed we'll see each other on Game Day. Together all in one place." ☀️

## NELSON'S WINNING POPPERS

A Post-win Tradition

Fresh banana boat peppers, sliced down the center, seeds removed

Fill with:

Jalapeño cheese

Bay shrimp

Fresh cilantro, chopped

Squeeze of fresh lime

Grill on barbecue, seam side up, until cheese melts and skin is softened.

## WILD FIRE BREWING COMPANY

Jeremy and Chris Cox, of JC's Bar and Grille, in partnership with brewer Paul Cook, launched the Wild Fire Brewing Company in Bend in 2006. Look for the following brews in select regional restaurants and bars.

Code 24 Pale Ale

Logger Lager

Winter Seasonal IPA

Summer Seasonal Ale