



## Beaverton's Café Yumm owner happy to give back to community

BY KRISTEN FORBES

*The Times, Aug 5, 2010*

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**Beaverton resident Aaron Gillette was a mortgage broker and residential developer when he decided to make a career shift. Noticing a financial loss even before the economic downturn, Gillette and his dad, who was also his business partner in the construction company, decided to give the restaurant industry a try. Gillette was born and raised in Eugene, where a popular restaurant called Café Yumm first opened in 1997.**

"In Eugene, I was introduced to Café Yumm really late," says Gillette. "It was around 2008. My cousin introduced me to it, my wife started going there, then I started going there. It was always so busy and fun and just seemed like a really neat thing. I checked it out on their web page and it said they were doing franchising."

Gillette saw this as his opportunity. The family took some transitional time to sell the last of the houses they'd built and then Gillette and his brother, Steve, relocated to the Portland area. His dad stayed in Eugene, where the rest of the family still lives.

"He's the guy I call when I need some direction," Gillette says of his father.

After spending his entire life in Eugene, moving up with his wife and two kids was a fun change for Gillette. Though daughter Hailey, 13, and Jacob, 11, were less than thrilled about the move in the beginning, they've since adjusted and enjoy the area.

Gillette originally eyed PSU, but it had a long way to go before being built and opened to the public. (It just opened a few months ago). Instead, he opted for a Café Yumm on Millikan Way in Beaverton; he opened that store March 15, 2009.

By interacting with his customers, he's happily learned that there are many people here who have ties to the Eugene area, often from growing up or going to college there.

"We get a lot of people who come in here who were familiar with Café Yumm in Eugene years ago," he says. "That's always exciting."

Gillette says he wants to be the type of owner who gives his customers a face to connect to the franchise, rather than leaving the work up to others and only showing up sporadically. He's at the restaurant Monday through Friday and often on Saturdays. He works the register during lunchtime, the restaurant's busiest time, meeting and greeting and educating his customers about Café Yumm's menu and food philosophy.

"Café Yumm offers all whole foods," Gillette says. "It's back to the basics, going back to beans and rice and raw vegetables. The tagline is 'Beautiful, Delicious and Nourishing.' A lot of people think beans and rice are just side dishes; they should come with your chicken or steak. I used to be one of those people. But beans and rice is a really great meal and we tie it together with the Yumm sauce, which is really the glue that holds everything together."

Gillette is also there in the mornings, taking care of paperwork. Managing a large group of people and balancing the line between friend and boss is one of the biggest changes he has noticed since switching from the construction business to the restaurant industry.

He does allow himself a weekly break.

"I stay away on Sundays, unless I'm stopping in for lunch after church," he says.

Finding the right church, Gillette says, was one of the biggest challenges of relocating to a new city. After trying a few out that didn't suit them as well, he says his family happily settled into Beaverton Foursquare Church.

Their new city suits the family well, too.

"We've noticed that in Beaverton, there's a lot of integration of nature. All of the Tualatin Hills Parks and Rec centers, all the parks – everything is so well maintained and really beautiful."

All marketing money goes back to the community, Gillette says, including the Beaverton schools and Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation. He notes the restaurant uses the most organic and local ingredients possible while catering to many specific diets, such as vegetarian and vegan. The café is also very green, with some of the table made from sunflower seed shells and other tables made from recycled paper.

"We do what we can to give back," he says, "and we're really happy to be a part of the Beaverton community."

Café Yumm is located at 14601 S.W. Millikan Way in Beaverton. Visit [www.cafeyumm.com](http://www.cafeyumm.com) or call 503-627-YUMM for more information.

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