



Darby Huffman takes a break from glazing his pottery. *Leader photo by Luke Anderson*

LaughinGnome: A taste for something great

LUKE ANDERSON
LANDERSON@PTLEADER.COM

If you’ve ever found the bite of whisky a little too harsh, or your glass of wine hasn’t gone down all too smooth, there may be an unconventional answer for your problem.

Instead of springing for a nicer bottle next time to conquer that unwanted taste, you might consider learning about nucleation.

What’s nucleation? Owner of LaughinGnome Pottery Darby Huffman could tell you all about it, or at least how it applies to pottery.

Years back, when Huffman was first starting what is now the LaughinGnome Pottery company, he discovered that the clay he uses possesses a unique ability to make the beverage it holds taste better. Some quality of the clay chemically reacts with air outside the cup and the liquid on the inside to give any beverage a rounder, fuller taste - even water. Huffman has tested out his theory, too, with confirming results. At the Port Townsend Farmers market, people who drank coffee out of LaughinGnome mugs and cups reported



A rack of recently shaped LaughinGnome wine cups. *Leader photo by Luke Anderson*

that they indeed could taste the difference between drinks in LaughinGnome Pottery versus drinks in regular glasses. Almost mistakenly, Huffman had

figured it out one night over a bottle of wine when he and his ex-wife discovered that the bottle tasted much better from the unglazed pottery wine cup, than from a regular

wine glass. This apprehension, though by accident, has proved to be a bridge between Huffman and his niche, which has allowed him to start a successful business selling his pottery.

When Huffman was in preschool, and he had his first pottery project, he obviously didn’t know too much about playing with clay, but he did know that his name was on the bottom: it was something that he had made.

“I knew when I did it, that’s what I wanted to do,” Huffman said.

As he grew up, he realized that there weren’t any potters in his small town that he could learn from. And, while all of his friends got jobs at the tire shop, Huffman wanted to get out of town.

Luckily during his last years in high school, his parents moved to Grass Valley, where Huffman got to go to a school where he could play with clay. Most days, Huffman would complete all the stuff he did not like to do first - like math and science - then he could be free to work with pottery all he wanted.

see **TASTE** Page B4

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