
Bill Geist Goes To Hot Dog U.

Where Do Those Who Hear The Call To Operate Hot Dog Carts Master Their Trade?

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(CBS) Sunday Morning correspondent Bill Geist is pursuing a lifelong dream of running his own hot dog stand by enrolling in Hot Dog University. This is his story.

Friends, if you're like me you've probably always dreamed of owning and operating your own hot dog cart, but didn't have the necessary knowledge and confidence to do it.

Now there's a way forward: Hot Dog University. The faculty is Mark Reitman, Ph.D. - professor of hot dogs - who offers an intensive two-day degree program in Milwaukee.

"Good morning, everyone, I'd like to welcome you to the November session of Hot Dog University, where you will learn what is called the 'art of the cart,'" he told his eager new students. "Every single possible thing you need to know before you even go out and buy a cart. There is a science to selling hot dogs."

Hot Dog U prides itself on a low faculty-to-student ratio. Ours was a class of four, including Barry, curator of the Mustard Museum in Mount Horeb, Wisc., who says ketchup does not belong on a hot dog; Tim, a Kenosha bee-keeper; and Yvette, an Austin, Texas schoolteacher who has bought a cart.

"This is gonna sound hippy-dippy but I heard the call," she said. "It was an epiphany."

The curriculum begins with Hot Dogs 101, which includes lessons like you don't boil hot dogs, you *simmer* them. It then moves on to Advanced Condimentation, where students learn that chili cheese dogs on a cart are far too much trouble.

There are also the mundane compulsory courses, like permits and licenses. "You're going to need an E.I.N., an employee identification number," Mark said. "We're set up as an L.L.C., limited liability corporation."

Lunch is a field trip to study perhaps the most complex dog of all: the Chicago-style dog. Then, an educational stop at a restaurant supply store where students learn the difference between good tongs and bad tongs.

Mark says you can make a living these days selling hot dogs. He says a good hot dog cart operator can make a six-figure income.

The final exam is selling hot dogs, polish sausages and Big Wally - a half-pound all-beef wonder - in front of a suburban appliance superstore on a busy Saturday.

This would be a test, but I was ready (or thought I was). But when I opened up the top of the cart to retrieve the dogs, my glasses steamed up. But you gotta work through it. That's what they teach you at Hot Dog U. The whole day was a blur. We'd sold hundreds of dogs - all we had. Then we reached a bittersweet moment: Graduation.

"What we have in front of us today is the November graduate class of Hot Dog University," Reitman said. We were all proud graduates of the Harvard of encased meats.