



2022
INDUCTEE



Joe Traeger

Business/Industry, Restaurateur

In 1978, while Joe Traeger was working in the heating business, a man from a lumber company in Klamath Falls, Oregon brought him a five-gallon bucket of wood pellets. It was just the fuel he needed to create the first pellet stove. Pellets provided a cleaner, easier burn than regular wood, and with a higher combustion rate, Joe knew he was on to something with the use of pellets in his products. All of this led up to that fateful day: the Fourth of July in 1985. Joe was barbecuing chicken on his brand-new gas grill, and when he stepped away for just a moment, he came back to find the grill engulfed in flames. In anger, Joe kicked the BBQ (food and all) right off the back deck, and he set out to create a new, better type of BBQ: the pellet grill.

Joe Traeger invented the Traeger Wood Pellet Grill in 1986, a product which revolutionized the barbecue industry, starting an entirely new classification in barbecuing. Rather than using charcoal or gas, pellet grills provided a new way to BBQ, and by obtaining a patent on his invention, Joe was able to ensure that the Traeger BBQ was the only pellet grill on the market for twenty years. With the help of his nine children and the support of his loving wife, Joe grew a small family business into a world-renowned company, inventing not only the Traeger Grill, but also the entire pellet grilling category itself.

Joe Traeger has been a resident of Mount Angel, Oregon for all eighty-two years of his life. Not only did he run Traeger Pellet Grills, but he also founded and owned the Mount Angel Brewing Company, a restaurant seating 400 people which showcased food cooked on the pellet grills. After spending most of those years around fire: fireman for thirty-five years, in the heating business, in the manufacturing of wood products, barbecues, furnaces, stoves, boilers, of all sizes and shapes, he has never lost the love he has for fire.