Learn Agri-Food News

Issue 2.10
December, 2004

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Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting—

January 11, 2005

7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

The equipment report will be ready. Bring your ideas and questions. We'll take advice on where to go from here.

The Innovation Network

Who Was Who in December?

At the December **Learn Agri-Food Network** meeting the business owners were asked to introduce themselves and (perhaps) talk about challenges they face in the next while. The meeting is always adjourned after 120 minutes. Introductions included a look at the products and marketing materials people brought for critique. Conversation sparkled such that we adjourned from introductions after 12**5** minutes and then many stayed to talk some more. Here are some highlights (with permission from those present)

Starbright Farm, Heather Porrill wanted packaging advice ideas for outlets for her dry mixes. See page 4 for more.

The Berry Basket, Arnie Meyer received advice to consider selling the fruit leather as an "After Eight" fancy dinner palate cleanser after the meal..

Briggswood Country Preserves, Gail Briggs announced that local people are beginning to value local product as 'quality'.

Birch Hills Bath Company, Tara Sallis discovered a need to be in conversation with the federal government on ingredients and labels for her very natural soap products.

First Nature Farms, Jerry and daughter Kerry Kitt, says he is in the alternative meat business and his main focus is selling meat direct to families. We brainstormed ideas for making his freezers visually accessible (government speak for: get rid of the reflection of the lights and show off the product. See page 2 for more.

Coveralls for Kids, Kathy Meyer reports one thousand sold and puts her phone number in the label.

Prairie Dream Organics, Charlotte & Tom Openshaw easily moved all their vegetables and has been in conversation with the Food Processing Development Center, Leduc.

Rosewood Meadows Inc., Linda Prudhomme Warrior is marketing her meat to 'intelligent consumers' who want to reconnect to the farm. Dan Prudhomme pleased us all with his naturally flavoured fudges. His challenge is gearing up and obtaining less costly ingredients. See page 2 for more.

Package & Label

Daniel Prudhomme, Rosewood Meadows Inc. brought fudge in a variety of flavours to the December meeting. Wow! There were no fights in the parking lot about which one was best, partly because tasting made us

Rosewood Meadow's Daniel Prudhomme brought Candy to the meeting

all too happy to want to be right. They were great. Chocolate, maple and caramel… ooh and the raspberry cream!

Sell, Sell, Sell: but what's the message received?

Jerry Kitt shared a story about learning NOT to show photos of live animals at his Farmers' Market booth at Old Strathcona in Edmonton. His family is proud of the care they give their animals and he knows his buyers are keen on organic and gently raised meat BUT … many won't buy if they see pretty piglets and gentle cows in front of them.

Daniel Prudhomme says some of his customers looked at his fudge packages and

Jerry Kitt at the Old Strathcona Alberta Approved Farmers' Market

thought they were looking at soap. New packaging and presentation will help, for sure.

What thousand words are your products giving your buyers. One picture, they say, is worth that. Check it out.

A newsletter to bring information, ideas and people together. If you are interested in profit from value adding agriculture in the Peace it's for you.

When we say 'member', who do we mean? We mean any person in the ag-value adding business from idea holders to multi billionaires, who read this newsletter or attend any of the training sessions.

At each meeting we stress the need for confidential care of information and the responsibility of the speaker in this area too.

Farewell to Bruce Rutley

The photo on the right shows Bruce Rutley the way we know him best:

- smiling,
- working with processors, and
- present..

Bruce has taken a position on Vancouver Island where he and wife Lois eventually want to live.

At our December meeting, he said his good byes eloquently and indicated that he has some thoughts on ways to sell our Peace products to that market, so we said "see you soon" not "good bye." We thank him for his ideas, connections, logic and leaps of faith.

Bruce Rutley presenting Gail Briggs her HACCP course participation certificate

Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

you are welcome to any or all

Tuesday, January 11 Alexander's north east corner of highways 2 and 49 at Rycroft ***7:00 to 9:00 p.m.***	Learn Agri-Food Meeting 1. Equipment report 2. Updates from members. 3. What did Heather Porrill have to do to get into a Community Hall? It's free and an opportunity to get and give feedback on your business products, challenges and ideas.
Tuesday, **February 8** 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.	Learn Agri-Food Meeting The Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association will hold their annual meeting from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. over supper. If you don't get the announcemt by January 15, call Gail Briggs or Susan Meyer
Tuesday, March 8 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.	Learn Agri-Food Meeting Put these on your calendar so you can plan to share a ride or bring a business idea for feedback

Help us help others. If your know anyone who might find the Learn Agri-Food Network valuable, tell them how to contact us and maybe share this newsletter. Call Susan Meyer for another copy if you gave yours away but want it.
Farmers' Market vendors are one of the groups we think might enjoy this information. Happy 2005!

Far

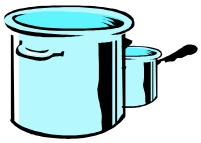
These Group Members agree to put their contact information in the newsletter so you can call with advice or a question.

Charlotte Openshaw
chartom@telusplanet.net
780-835-4550
Kathy & Leo Meyer
780-774-2051
Tara Sallis
bhbathco@telusplanet.net
780-694-2377
Gil & Darlene Hegel
hegel@telus.net
780-356-3627
Jerry & Sam Kitt
jkitt@telusplanet.net
780-356-2239
Gail & Stan Briggs
brigswod@telusplanet.net
780-765-2408
Heather Porrill
porrill@telusplanet.net
780-353-3050
Linda Prudhomme-Warrior
warrior1@telusplanet.net
780-624-8227
Gerty Sorensen
gertys@telusplanet.net
780-568-3308
Arnie Meyer
berrybas@telusplanet.net
780-567-2495
Julie Gour
peacecountrybaskets@telus.net
780-322-2270

Using a Community Hall as a Processing Plant

See these products? Heather Porrill, Starbright Farm, put up her display at the December meeting. She asked for packaging and pricing feedback. Notice the recipe book, the four categories of packaged product and her quick display tools—great looking fabric for a backdrop, string of seashells or beads to tie the table together.

Heather reports that she and her daughter made twice the product in half the time using the large counters and walking around space at an inspected kitchen at a community hall. We anticipate learning a lot from her about the ropes she had to jump and how it all worked. Interesting how in 2004, Heather got her act together so quickly. Happy 2005 to her and all of you.



Processing Equipment Project

The **Working Group** heard that finding micro and mini-sized* processing equipment is difficult. Here's what we're doing to help:

- A focus group of a number of you produced lists of equipment names and descriptions of the lines and the sizes you might need.
- Eileen Kotowich with Alberta Agriculture will help create two directories—sources of new and used small equipment (a place to start looking) and a list of people who are knowledgable about what to look for in such equipment.
- We're still listening— bring your thoughts and questions to us. We'll keep updating our report.

* 100 pieces a batch or so—not 100 gallon vats of product.

Attend the Learn Agri-Food meeting on January 11 for a report on equipment, how Heather Porrill is using a community hall to process and news from other members of the group.

Bring a friend if you like.

For Peace Region Ag Entrepreneurs, brought to you by:

The Working Group which includes: Gail Briggs and Jerry Kitt, as well as:

Jim Smith

The Innovation Network
Fairview

1-866-835-5005

Nicole McMullan

Alberta Economic Development

Grande Prairie

538-5635

Elaine Stenbraaten

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development

Fairview

835-7531

Karen Goad

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development

Grande Prairie

538-5629

Susan Meyer

Editor

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development

Grande Prairie

538-5630

Fax: 538-5288