



Learn Agri-Food Network

April and May
2007

Supporting agri-preneurs in sharing information with peers to build **businesses** of ag or rural based experiences, products and services.

Report from the April Learn Agri-Food Network meeting:

Gail Briggs exuded good health as she shared her mantra, "You can't think clearly with a weary mind." Taking time this winter to reinvigorate spurred her to use her written records for decision making; we celebrate with Gail.

After many years growing Briggswood Country Preserves Gail and her husband Stan are ready to enjoy the fruits of their labour. This year Gail purchased a holiday trailer which will be used for touring, as well as home base for the trade show circuit. They will be testing it at a trade show in Peace River.



Gail says selling various ways has taught her some things: there's a cycle of wow, I'm selling, then there's a wow, that's a great product and fun, and then there is a focusing (five products) and sell at a price that makes profit.

We all slowed down while Heather Porrill, Star Bright Farms, talked about her latest venture, Buttery Bites and fed us her hand cut, melt-in-your-mouth caramels. "Don't fall in love with your product," she said as we did just that. These caramels are flying off the shelves at her farmers' markets. **Now she needs** a caramel wrapping machine. She could buy one for \$30,000 that does 80 per minute.

Heather has an inspected kitchen, so can sell into stores on both sides of the border and has learned, "refined sugar sells!" She is using the caramels as a fund raiser for a local young ballerina who is off to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet this summer. The Branding the Peace logo is on her food products and the caramels have nutrition facts on the label, too. As if that's not enough, Heather is working on a procurement Request for Proposal to get her caramels in the 2010 Olympics.

Learn from others at the next
Learn Agri-Food Network meeting:
Tuesday, May 8, 2007

1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
Spirit River - Provincial Building (upstairs in conference room)

The April Learn Agri-Food Network meeting was a great success. Participants especially enjoyed meeting with people from across the region. We discussed having cold winter meetings (November to March, for instance) as local meetings with the better highway season to be used for 'regional' events to allow a larger group to share ideas. Send us your thoughts on this idea.

Heather certainly gave evidence to "Web It Up" workshop instructor, Chester Groner's statement

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Learn Agri-food meeting crowd at the store in the Centre 2000.



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that people will pay for “wants”. She sells a cake mix for \$7.00. Knowing that her customers want a super moist cake they can make quickly, this hits the mark for profit in Heather’s market. Check out the Star Bright Farms web site: www.starbrightfarm.com

Susan King, who produces a variety of organic proteins, is branching out into ag-tourism. “I want people to come see what a healthy farm looks like and where food comes from.” Offering school tours so kindergarten and grade one students can experience a working farm seems like a good fit. Insurance is on **Sue’s needs list**. She was guided to Capri Insurance from Kelowna as a place to start.

Petra Hoentgesberg has been busy doing her business books and learned they’d sold a surprising amount of honey last year. That sets the stage for 2007 at their new digs near Sunset House.

Judy Bowcott and Ken Herlinveaux have taken lots of training this winter. They are considering downsizing their livestock numbers and are looking at adding an ag-tourism income stream. They’re weighing the downside to ag tourism such as their road and liability insurance as well. They’re committed to the environment and are researching self-sustaining ranching, solar fencing and using canola for fuel.

Gerty Sorensen says she has no problem selling her Christmas turkeys and roasting chickens. Now she’s found people from central Africa and Asian communities who are really happy to find lamb. Mini Creek Farms garners premium prices by targeting the right market where ‘promotion and persuasion’ are not necessary, just great meat.

Centre 2000 gift shop manager, Eileen Hintze told us that if the product is good and is in the right place it will sell. Packaging is important. Finding Peace Country products ready for tourists looking for ‘local’ makes her job fun.

Barb Barrs reported on her small tree farm. **They need to name it** now. She said the ag-tourism group is working on a driving route. Bev Dombrova loves the map on the back of Barb’s business card to her shop in the country. In view of continuous training Barb is going to art school in July for two weeks to Victoria which will be followed by an 8 month project.

Grande Prairie Downtown Farmers’ Market Spring Fling



(left-right) Larry and Sue King, Elsie Giesbrecht; Glen Kjemhus is carving the bison.

The Grande Prairie Downtown Farmers' Market Spring Fling was successful both as a revenue builder and as a community connection tool. Glendean Farms donated both the bison for roasting and the carving. Connections are important. They had the chef at the Grande Prairie Inn prepare the bison and be in attendance as well.



Enjoying the Grande Prairie Downtown Farmers’ Market Spring Fling at the Beaverlodge Community Centre.



Nutrition Labelling Workshop Success and Updates



(left-right) Laurie Helms, Lawrence Toderian and Laurel Kirsch participating in the Nutrition Labelling workshop

When the presenters enjoy meeting the participants as much as ours did, you, the business person have made a friend and helper.

Sonia Worobec, one of the **Nutrition Labelling** workshop speakers and from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), sends this message;

Thank you for your hospitality during our session in March. I hope to visit Grande Prairie again, with less snow.

This email is to make you aware of the allergen issue. As of March 23, 2007, Health Canada and CFIA posted an advisory to industry regarding declaring allergens. Please refer to the advisory at: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/invenq/inform/20070323e.shtml>

The bottom line is: if a pre-packaged food product has a list of ingredients, it must declare the allergens present, no exemptions. Pre-packaged products with a list of ingredients and undeclared allergens that pose a health risk will be subject to recall.

Gerty Sorensen, Mary Antonio and Dan Prudholme. Dan was the early bird winner for a nutrition analysis.



Peer Promotion Pays Off for Peace Entrepreneurs

Earlier this winter Jerry Kitt received a call from Mary MacArthur, a columnist for the  Western Producer. Mary was looking for agripreneurs with a story to tell and be interviewed during an upcoming trip to the Peace. Jerry pulled together a list representing diverse profit centres, Learn Agri-Food network groups and business maturities. Mary was thrilled! She came north, interviewed many of the suggested agripreneurs and headed home for a writing marathon. We're seeing the fruits of her labour in the last couple of issues of the Western Producer. In the April 12 issue (p 30), Gilbert Wolfe, apiarist extraordinaire from Guy, Alberta, talks about his innovative pouch packaging for honey. Look for *Honey Bunny* pouches on local grocery store shelves. *Buttery Bites* caramels are a new shining star in Heather Porrill's Star Bright Farm product line. A Learn Agri-Food Network and Branding the Peace member, Heather is just brimming with creativity after attending the Grow West convention in February. Read all about Heather and her new melt in your mouth nibbles on page 84 of the April 19 issue of the Western Producer.

Northern Alberta Youth Entrepreneurship Camp

Are you 13 - 15 years old? Interested in learning? Do you like camping? Do you want to... make money...start a business...go rock climbing...master archery...swim...canoe...meet new friends...be creative...have fun? The Northern Alberta Youth Entrepreneurship Camp wants YOU! This experience of a lifetime goes August 19 - 25, 2007 at Camp Warwa on the shores of Lac Ste. Anne, 80 km west of Edmonton. Call Chancey @ 1-800-263-1716 or go online to www.nayec.ca.



For Peace Region agricultural entrepreneurs.

Learn Agri-Food Network Team includes: Gail Briggs and Jerry Kitt, as well as:

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For toll free calling of all government staff dial 310-0000 first.

The Learn Agri-Food Network Team helps agripreneurs build profitable businesses to grow their industries.

Members look at business issues and apply them to the larger industry by supplying knowledge and information, reducing business development barriers and identifying resources.

We help reduce the tuition in the school of hard knocks.

Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

Learn Agri-Food Meeting
Tuesday
May 8, 2007
1:30-3:30 pm

Spirit River Provincial Building (upstairs in the conference room). Call Elaine Stenbraaten (780) 835-7531 or Susan Meyer (780) 538-5630. Dial 310-000 for toll-free access.

GeoTourism Canada Launch Celebration
Sunday
May 20, 2007
11 am-2 pm

Dunvegan Provincial Park (under the bridge). A great family outing with musicians and local food & beverage concession as well as a chance to learn about a terrific project for helping people from here and beyond explore the Peace.



Expecting Company? Preparing Your Site for Ag-Tourism

This DVD training tool is divided into nine sections. It is designed so you can watch and learn, section by section. At the end of each section there are probing questions and reflection activities to help you apply the information to your farm or ranch. You'll discover ways to make the most of your farm or ranch by looking at it from your guest's perspective. Learn how to: hone in on your target audience, identify your key attributes, offer "see, do and learn" activities, have the best in amenities, maximize visitor flow and enhance your site's appearance and atmosphere.

Expecting Company? DVD—DVD 888-10 \$20.00

To order by phone, call our Canadian toll-free line: 1-800-292-5697 or (780) 427-0391. To order online, visit: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications>

We're on the web:

www.peacecountrycanada.com

Look for The Innovation Network and then Learn Agri-Food