

# Learn Agri-Food Network

May and June  
2007

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

## Report from the May Learn Agri-Food Network Regional Meeting:

The May Learn Agri-Food meeting was in Spirit River and pricing with profit seemed to be the common challenge.

Lavonne Gladstone & her daughter Dalyce attended their first meeting. Lavonne loves to sing and found southern gospel music suited her. Music has taken Lavonne in directions she never thought she would go.



Lavonne and daughter Dalyce also attended the Branding Conference in April

A recently recorded CD of Lavonne singing a selection of gospel songs is being carried by some local stores. Accessing more outlets in the region are part of Lavonne's goal. She has become aware of the importance of radio air time. Awareness is the most expensive part of promotion. Very few radio stations play southern gospel music, so it's a challenge. Lavonne came to the Learn Agri-Food meeting for ideas. In the spirit of promoting one another, Susan offered to contact a CKUA (they play Alberta artists first) for advice and Kathy Meyer bought a CD to take home. If you have any marketing ideas let Lavonne know. (Phone: 780-835-3492)

Lavonne is also looking for events to sing at. She will be singing at some of the Fairview and area jamborees. If you know of an event that might be enhanced with a cheerful or thankful spiritual voice, give Lavonne a call. Check out her website and hear her sing at [www.lavonnegladstone.com](http://www.lavonnegladstone.com).

Not enough work? "Lavonne's Stitches" is her custom clothing business. It was great to listen to

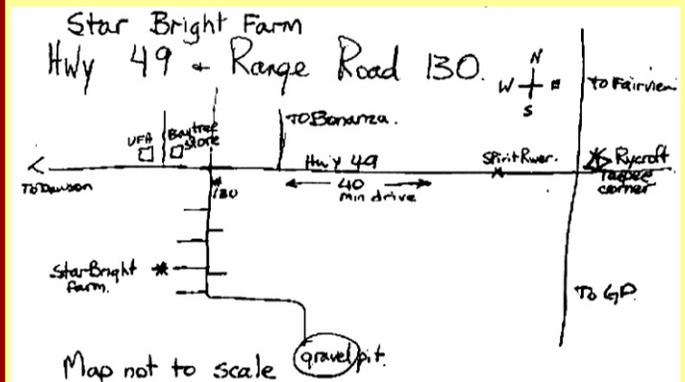
## Learn from others at the next Learn Agri-Food Network meeting: Tuesday, June 12, 2007

Our annual regional celebration of Learning Agri-Food Star Bright Farms (Heather Porrill) at Bay Tree call 780-353-3050 (cell 250-784-5700) if you get lost. If you phone Sherry at 780-538-6208 by June 4 to register for the lunch (\$15 per person) join us at 12:00 Alberta time.

### The meeting runs from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

We will tour Heather's operation and discuss her business and plans. In addition, bring three things:

1. interview 3 to 6 of your buying customers and be ready to tell us: why do they buy your product?
2. either what you did to improve your business in the past 12 months or what's on the agenda for next year.
3. lawn chairs.



There will be a sign at highway for June 12.

**From Dawson:** We are the first turn to the right after the Bay Tree Store, then the 3rd house on the right (about a 20 minute drive).

**From Rycroft Corner:** We are the first gravel intersection off of highway 49 after the Bonanza turn. If you get to the Bay Tree Store you have went to far (about a 40 minute drive from Rycroft).

Kathy Meyer (Coveralls for Kids) and Lavonne discuss the pluses and minuses of price, time commitment and profit margins related to creating a line of product compared to working for clients wanting bridal and formal wear.

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Barb Barr's love is pottery. In addition, she and Barry have other interests including a tree farm and rental business. Barb is also involved with the Ag tourism cluster, called the **Range Road Ramble**. Barb is going to be making coffee mugs with custom logos for Star Bright Farm which Heather Porrill will use for her gift line. She'll fill them with those melt in the mouth caramels.

**Heather Porrill of Star Bright Farm** is currently focusing on a caramel candy product called Bittery Bites. She is charging \$9 per bag and it's a premium price for a premium product. Each caramel is hand cut and wrapped. Heather believes in pricing for value and profit. She might as well be paid for all that work and quality!

*Gail Briggs stopped in to say hello; she was leaving for two weeks vacation and see her son Mark get married.*



Gail Briggs was invited to have a booth at the Peace River Trade show and used the opportunity to showcase Branding the Peace by using the banner display. She reports that the Peace Health Inspector requested to see her business license, food safe certificate and a Temporary Food Establishment permit. She was also asked for jam, jelly and pickle pH records. That was a first.



**Be Ready for Inspectors at Markets** – keep Gail's experience in mind. Get all your records together in one spot and plan to take them with you in case the information is requested.

### **Pricing an issue at the May Learn Agri-Food Meeting.**

Conversation at the meeting centered around pricing. "It's hard to price out and charge for every thing you do for a client, like fittings," said Lavonne. "Fitting a bride's gown can take a lot of time and discussion to make sure you understand what the bride wants. It's a stressful time that requires focus."

A customer gave Lavonne pricing advice. "I sewed her a blouse, asked for \$60.00 but felt it was too high. I told her I thought I should maybe lower the price. At that point my most valuable customer to me NOT to second guess my prices. 'Your custom made service has value and **the price is the price**, she told me".

**Kathy Meyer** still finds pricing tough even after 8 years in business. She worries that her young Mom's with families can't afford to pay that much for coveralls. She doesn't want to overcharge them. Kathy sells her coveralls through word of mouth, as well as Christmas and trade shows. She loves to sew and likes to see all those little coveralls hanging in her sewing room. We think her work is worth more than \$25 per hour. She says half that in cash matched with half in the 'perks' of flexibility, being her own boss and choosing what work life she wants to live would be great.

**Barb Barrs** also struggles with pricing her product. She's reading Suze Orman, a personal financial guru, who says that women don't adequately value what they're worth.

Advice worth considering:

Decide on your target audience or market. Your customers are willing to pay more for a higher quality premium product. Realize there are budget conscious consumers that will want to buy your product at a discounted price. Stay focused and remember they may not be your customers.

If you're producing a limited edition and special product charge a fair but premium price.

Tell buyer your top price and then negotiate down if you want to offer them a deal. But tell them the price so they know the actual price and let them figure out the savings.

Be proud that your product costs that much.

Alberta Grown...simply the best! is the key purpose of the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association (AFFPA or Farm Fresh).

Farm Fresh is an association in Alberta that is dedicated to farm direct marketers and their ventures. For an annual membership fee of \$110 per year you receive:



- listing in "Come to our Farms" brochure, the association's promotional flagship with a distribution of over 40,000
- reduced rates on AFFPA courses and workshops
- savings through bulk purchases, including strawberry bulk order
- quarterly newsletter, "Direct Currents"
- free promotion in newsletter, on website, and press releases
- toll free customer service number
- networking opportunities with direct marketers across the province
- horticulture research funding

More than 150 farm direct marketers across Alberta representing fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs, honey, fruit wines, plants, trees, alpaca fibre and other specialty items support your industry association. For more information or a membership form contact Don and Joan Gregorwich. Call toll free 1-800-661-2642 email [webmaster@albertafarmfresh.com](mailto:webmaster@albertafarmfresh.com) or explore their website [www.albertafarmfresh.com](http://www.albertafarmfresh.com).

## Step It Up

The Alberta Farm Fresh Producers' Association and the Alberta Farmers' Market Association are joining forces to produce a marketing conference for the Alberta farm direct marketing industry. The conference, **Step It Up**, will go February 6 and 7, 2008 at the Royal Executive Inn in Nisku. We anticipate this will be an annual event. It will replace the bi-annual Explore Direct conference.

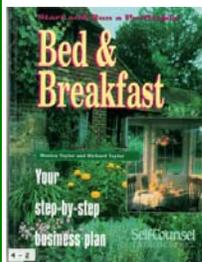
A conference committee has been formed but additional help is needed. If you would like to get involved on a subcommittee, help out during the event or offer topic or speaker ideas please contact the program chair, Marian Williams at 780-679-5168 (for toll free access dial 310-0000 first) or email [marian.williams@gov.ab.ca](mailto:marian.williams@gov.ab.ca).

## Did You Know...

Alberta Agriculture & Food in Grande Prairie has a great little resource library of books for small business—especially related to agriculture and rural tourism. Come in to browse, sit and read or sign one out.

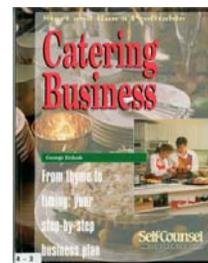
### Book report:

Sue King, Harmony's Way Farm, signed out two books from the resource library. She says:



"Start & Run a Bed & Breakfast Business" set everything out in an orderly fashion. It's Canadian based and discussed regulation in a general way." Sue especially appreciated the coverage of the 'design process' and as a paperwork conscious person she also read the record keeping information with diligence.

"Start and Run a Profitable Catering Business" was elementary, so Sue recommends it for someone just starting out.



## Food Safety Funding Still Available

For a limited time funding is available through the APF, Food Safety Initiative (APF/FSI) for non-federally registered processors to implement changes to food safety practices in their manufacturing facilities. Up to \$20,000 is available to eligible processors. Expenses considered eligible may include: food safety training; food safety and HACCP consultant fees; food safety audit fees; travel/accommodation; and incremental costs for labour or salaried services and related employment costs. Qualified food safety specialists are available to assist you, at no cost, in filling out the funding application, to conduct a gap assessment and develop your work plan. For more details about the APF/FSI program or the *Alberta HACCP Advantage* (AHA!) program, visit [www.agric.gov.ab.ca/aha](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/aha). If you have questions and wish to speak to a food safety specialist or are ready to get started, call 780-427-4054.



For Peace Region agricultural entrepreneurs.

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

**Nicole McMullan**

PREDA

538-5635

**Gary Christopherson**

Consultant, Grimshaw

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**Alberta Agriculture & Food**

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**Send submissions to Sherry.**

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

The Learn Agri-Food Network Team helps agri-preneurs 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**  
**June 12, 2007**  
**1:30-3:30 pm**

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**Wanted: Ranchers, Farmers, Greenhouse Growers, Beekeepers, Micro processors, Meat Processors & Butchers**

**For the month of September, Alberta consumers can enjoy special menus dishes created with regional Alberta ingredients in participating restaurants.**

### Do You Know What Dine Alberta 2007 Has To Offer?

Recruiting for Dine Alberta 2007, is now actively underway. This program links local Alberta producers, processors with chef's and the foodservice industry.

- Chefs love it because they can get creative and their customers want to support local.
- Consumers enjoy championing 'their' farmers by eating fresh 'local' dishes.

#### What the chefs want:

- traceability back to a local family farm
- specialty meats, breed, or production practices:
  - *type*: elk, deer, bison, lamb, fowl, farmed-fish, grass-finished cattle, pastured pork, rabbit
  - *variety*: Wagyu, Dexter, Galloway beef, Katahdin lamb, etc
- potatoes, vegetables- (field grown and greenhouse), fruit, herbs, honey, grain, pulse crops.
- dairy: cheese, yogurt, or any other value added processing.
- *preferred* production practices of free range, organic, on-farm biodiversity, limited or no hormones, GMO free, etc.
- processed foods from Alberta producers

#### What producers need:

- Access to professional butchers and value added meat processors.
- Assistance getting their product into the foodservice industry.
- To register NOW to be included in a hard copy directory that is provided to participating chefs and located on-line. Late registrants will only be listed in the Regional Cuisine Sourcing Directory on the Dine Alberta website.

The 2007 producer and restaurant sign-up packages are now available on the Dine Alberta website @ [www.dinealberta.ca](http://www.dinealberta.ca). Interested producers and chefs are encouraged to download the applications and return them to the Dine Alberta team for inclusion in this year's program.

**For more information on the Dine Alberta program please check [www.dinealberta.ca](http://www.dinealberta.ca) or phone Cindy Cuthbert at 780-538-5287. For toll free access, dial 310-0000 first.**



*We're on the web:*

[www.peacecountrycanada.com](http://www.peacecountrycanada.com)

Look for Culture of Innovation and then Learn Agri-Food