



Learn Agri-Food Network

November/December
2007

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

Learn Agri-Food Network News

Entrepreneurs met to share ideas at November's meeting in Grande Prairie. They are looking forward to the joint December network meeting in Rycroft.

Two displays of product magically appeared for comment by the others and ideas flew like mosquitoes in front of bats at dusk. Carol Mayer brought a collection of her children's stories that she sells at markets and via her web page www.furbabyboutique.com. We took a look at her web site. Dog sweaters are the first order of business, but Carol hopes the stories for kids to surpass her knitted products.

One suggestion for Carol was to build her stories into 'collections' or series. This idea would encourage grandmothers to 'finish out the collection' for their grand kids. At the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market the next weekend, Carol reported the idea worked well and produced more sales.

Carol wanted ideas on how to get into stores. Heather Porrill, had this advice, "I don't do consignment." "When they own the product they take care of the shelves and make it sell."

Carol's problem is more of an introvert issue, however. That led to an ad lib practice with each person around the table approaching an imaginary buyer. By the time we were done, Carol had many ideas for approaching a store manager including:

- Make an appointment
- Ask lots of questions.
- Take samples and leave one or some
- Have a pricing system that lets you and the store make profit
- Be prepared with shelf and display ideas and materials
- ASK THE QUESTION: "How many shall I leave with you today?", for example.

**It's free and everyone is welcome
Learn Agri-Food Network meeting:
Tuesday, December 11, 2007**

December 11 the whole network will meet at Alexander's Restaurant in Rycroft for a region wide sharing meeting. Join us from 1:30 to 3:30. Come for lunch in the restaurant at noon.

The Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association will have a short information meeting at 3:30 p.m. to update members and new members on activities including training sessions slated for the new year. The membership fee is very low and the influence wielded by the association is awesome so do stick around for this part of the day.

Bring a friend to both events. That way you will have someone to chat with about all the fresh ideas on the way home.

The next Learn Agri-Food Network meeting will be on Tuesday, January 8. Look for location details in the Dec/Jan Newsletter.



Carol Mayer

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As usual the conversation touched on many issues including pricing, insurance, allergies, recipe writing and what do customers really want?

Heather Porrill is looking for recipes to use Peace region grown foods. She is planning to publish a book with photos. Call Heather at 780-353-3050 or come to the December Learn Agri-Food Network meeting to get involved in the project.

Heather is a great promoter who uses many avenues and stories. Telling a prospective customer a price is NOT one of her issues any more. Her 'fair trade' story, one of ordering embroidered bags from Viet Nam where the artisans are properly compensated for their work, add a touch of "I care for others" to the indulgence in Heather's Buttery Bites caramels.

Mary Antonio got right in to the conversation about products, food safety and pricing for farmers' markets. In fact, before the end of the week she was searching for more information having thought up a few new ideas for products. Look for some frozen, cook-at-home 'for a just baked aroma' items at her table soon.

We all enjoy Gerty Sorensen's energy. She's thinking of adding pork to her meat line. That's where the conversation on recipe writing actually started. We are aware that many potential customers do not cook, but would like to. We could make their day by providing easy to follow recipes.

The Rycroft meeting was just as informative.

Barb Barrs is getting ready for her Christmas sales and shows. Her open house is on December 8. She related challenges with some of her glazes. Most of us had no idea what she was talking about since this production problem is very technical.

Gail Briggs is excited that her son, Randy, is helping in all parts of the business. He's been seen at the Grande Prairie Farmer's Market doing promotion and sales.

Soames Smith, Uddersmith Dairy, Rycroft, is selling retail packs of certified organic and grass fed beef. He's a member of the Weston A. Price Foundation.
www.westonaprice.org

Elaine Stenbraaten is involved in the distribution project and looks forward to the December 10 meeting. Registered producers and processors will work with the consultant to create possible distribution solutions of moving product to buyers.

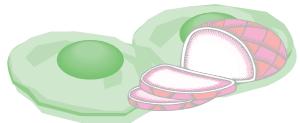
She is also keenly interested in both value chains and information related to bio fuels at work. If you want more information call Elaine.

Web sites of Learn Agri-Food Network members:
www.starbrightfarm.com
www.eurekasoap.com
www.lavonnegladstone.com

Some buyers love to find people using the internet. There maybe opportunity for us to connect with them.

For a listing North American Farm Direct Marketing Association members, including Heather Porrill, go to:
www.nafdma.com/Public/VisitMembers/MemberList

Wanted: Unique food products for restaurant menus



Mary Ellen and Andreas Grueneberg of Green Eggs and Ham near Leduc are looking for producers interested in selling unique Alberta food products into restaurants. The Gruenebergs who currently supply products to several restaurants are looking for additional naturally produced, unusual or heritage items to add color, flavor and texture to plating. Producers would keep their identity in all sales.

They're also seeking producers interested in growing odd, unusual and heritage vegetables for them.

For more information contact:
Mary Ellen, Greens, Eggs & Ham
780-986-8680



Hint Hint Card

Here is an alternative idea to the gift registry. The client takes home a card which describes something they'd like someone else to buy for them. You customize this card for your business.

Elaine Stenbraaten found the Hint Hint card at the Artisan Centre in Stony Plain. It fits their business quite well and can be adapted to many different products.

Elaine knows that giving her husband direct hints is the best route to go. Persuading potential buyers to use your cards could be quite fun.



This side of the card you would customize to your own business.



Great People = Growing Profit\$

Agricultural producers and agri-processors know that finding and keeping great employees can be a huge challenge especially in a one-or two-person operation. The Learn Agri-Food Network is bringing to the Peace a half day, results oriented workshop to acquire creative, practical and proven solutions to your labour issues that you can immediately use in your business.

You Will Learn:

- your real cost of employee turnover
- how to increase profits using the "HR as a Profit Centre Model"
- methods to attract great people
- low cost/high impact methods to motivate your staff and keep them productive and happy
- how other organizations are successfully dealing with workforce issues

This workshop is open to anyone in the agriculture sector, its service industries and beyond. It is designed for owner/operator businesses and those with 1 to ten employees. If there is sufficient interest we will look at holding the workshop in two locations in the Peace. Call Sherry to express your interest and for information. Check out the next LAF newsletter for workshop location, cost and other details.

Energy, Environment, Economy & YOU



"Taking the Blinders Off"
Community Futures Grande Prairie & Region Presents:
Next Steps Symposium 2008

Schedule:

January 16, 2008 - Registration

January 17, 2008

9:00-11:00 am Keynote: Brad Stelfox

11:00 am-12:30 pm Breakout Sessions:

Alternatives to Electricity, The Future of Farming, Coal Bed Methane, Nuclear Energy, the Future of Forestry, The Future of Oil & Gas.

1:30-3:30 pm Keynote: Richard Worzel

3:30-5:00 pm Moderated Plenary Session

Call today to register 780-830-7411.



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

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Send submissions to Sherry.

For toll free calling to provincial government staff dial 310-0000 first.

The Learn Agri-Food Network Team helps agripreneurs build profitable businesses to grow their industry. 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
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Alexander's Restaurant in Rycroft from 1:30 to 3:30. Come for lunch in the restaurant at noon.

The Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association will have a short information meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Agri-Food Distribution in the Peace Last Chance to Register!!!

Specialty producers, food processors, chefs & caterers are invited to investigate cost effective and efficient agriculture & food distribution solutions for small scale & rural agripreneurs.

Your benefits include:

- A made-in-the-Peace solution
- A solution targeted to your business needs
- Individual time with a logistics specialist
- Identification of needs for market access and business growth
- Potential business alliances
- A tested economical and effective food distribution alternative
- Market opportunities

Your commitment is:

- Intent to participate in both phases
- A participation fee up to \$100 for each phase
- Up to 4 days with a logistics specialist in Phase 1 and 1 hour a week in Phase 2
- 6 meetings until December 2008
- Testing the chosen solution with partners
- To provide (confidentially) cost and sales financial information, product mix, as well as current shipping and buyer details to consultant and regional representatives
- Describing impacts to your business & profits

Register today. Call 780-538-6208 for information. Start-up meeting goes December 10.

RENEWAL.

Canada

The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF)
A FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL INITIATIVE

Alberta

We're on the web:

www.peacecountrycanada.com

Look for Culture of Innovation and then Learn Agri-Food