



Learn Agri-Food Network

December 2006
To
January 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 Meeting

December Notes

Grande Prairie Meeting:

Thanks to Cindy Cuthbert's report on the Grande Prairie/ Bezanson meeting at Dianne Schleiter's house.

It was a very relaxed and cozy setting as we nestled around the hub of any farm house - the kitchen, drank coffee, ate homemade baking and visited. We had five people: Gerty Sorensen, Dianne Schleiter, Mary Antonio, Holly Barnfield and myself.

Gerty Sorensen, Mini Creek Farm, is in the middle of selling turkeys for Christmas. She plans to increase her freezer space and install shelves she'll just slide the boxes onto shelves, then label them on the front side by weight. Gerty's goal is to have a more organized freezer. Do I hear the makings of a New Year's Resolution?

Wanted: Roller Conveyer Belt
(like the used in the bottle depot).
Gerty is finding it hard to lift the heavy boxes. Looking for easy loading/unloading solutions.
Call Gerty at 780-568-3308



Gerty is still planning to attend the Longest 70 Mile Garage Sale in PEI next September, with her sister. They expect 30,000 people will go through the event in two days. She thinks the Peace should hold the "Longest Day of the Year Sale" and has contacted Branding the Peace to check out their interest. If you'd like to get involved, call Gerty.

Host, Dianne Schleiter lives north of Bezanson. She makes saddle pads, tractor seats and baby bed liners out of wool. Dianne is interested in making more horse merchandise, toys for children and personal care products such as soap.

Dianne would like more information on pricing products.

From her farm kitchen near the Kleskin Hills, Mary

**Learn from others at the next
Learn Agri-Food Network meeting:
Tuesday, January 9, 2007**

Grande Prairie 1:15 to 3:15 p.m. at Gerty Sorensen's house: Go west of Grande Prairie on Highway 34. Turn left (north) of Bezanson on Secondary Highway 733 towards Teepee Creek. Turn east (right) onto Township Road 734. Travel east 2 ¼ miles and it is the first driveway on the left (north) after Range Road 31. There are red buildings in yard,. If you need help give Gerty a call at 568-3308.

Rycroft 1:15 to 3:15 p.m. at Alexander's Restaurant (join us in the restaurant for lunch at noon if you can.)

High Prairie 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Pioneer Thresherman's Hall at Triangle. Call Susan Meyer at 780-538-5630 for more information. For toll free access use 310-0000.

Antonio started with a little baking. The project progressed to selling her baking at the Bezanson farmers' market. Now she's now dabbling in pickles and thinks she'd like to get into promoting, cooking and selling ethnic foods such as perogies, cabbage rolls, etc. I asked Mary, "Where do I sign up?"!!!

Vending at the Bezanson market a couple times showed Holly Barnfield, who sells meat (pork, and beef), how much time that it takes. She's decided she cannot make that commitment but has lots of ideas for projects. A joint venture with her son who likes to build things seems a natural fit for her interest in crafts. Finding the time to set up the business is still a problem. Interested in sourcing gluten-free baking and supplies, Holly is considering either baking the goods and selling them at a farmers' market or just supplying the dry ingredients. She is also looking into creating a gluten-free retail list as well as a cook book.

Gerty, Dianne and Mary have all applied to the Agri-Preneur Scholarship program for assistance to attend Grow West. They are all excited about the trade show portion of the conference, too. We reviewed the brochure and the registration form.

The business profile sheet that accompanied the

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newsletter was reviewed at the meeting. Cindy discussed the training the LAF Working Group is planning for the upcoming year which sparked considerable interest. We thought another training session we could host is food safety training. As many of our members sell at farmers' markets, we anticipate good interest. Pricing is an issue for most. As a member of the Farm Direct Marketing Protein Team, Cindy, told them a Pricing factsheet will be available in the new year.

The Bezanson group is full of ideas. They just need to find the time. All Learn Agri-Food members have different training needs. We will do what we can to find help for you.

Cindy Cuthbert

The meeting wrapped up with Gerty reading an excerpt from the winter 2006 issue of Food for Thought, page 38 - Hassle Free Baking.

High Prairie Meeting:

Thanks to Deb Morowski for the High Prairei meeting review.

We talked about different approaches to selling our product through stores. Rachel Kemp said that the majority of stores ask for 30% commission. Another option is that the store buys your product at a wholesale price. When questioned if the store is more aggressive selling for you if it works on commission, Rachel said it depends on the store.

Betty Claydon shared ideas about building contracts with stores. Apparently some stores will do up the contract for you. In-store displays of your product can also be an issue. (Susan adds: relationship building is only one of the important parts of the game. A distributor – that's you when you direct sell – is often in a store, moving the product around to make it neat, more attractive and smart.)

The costs of doing business made for lively conversation. Examples discussed included phone calls made to collect money owed to you for your product. We shared advice about keeping in regular contact with your retailer or any buyer. Rachel also reminded us that there is high turnover in personnel due to the economy so the person you deal with today may not be there tomorrow. Rachel told a little story about one business that had sold out and **not** notified their suppliers. The suppliers might have

been out monies owed plus any product and/or equipment in the stores. We need to have our stories ready for new employees, of course, and even new owners, apparently.

Rachel described ways to get money for training and other business needs. Her examples included scholarships and The Alberta Food Processors Association (www.afpa.com/main.shtml/). Rachel says, "Don't get too big too fast." We discussed that when you get big enough to have to hire employees, then your profits from sales need to cover their wages.

This was a good meeting. I enjoyed the advice of others and the "experience stories" of things that can happen. Some of the stories are real eye openers.

Deb Morawski

Rycroft Meeting:

The Learn Agri-Food meeting in Rycroft was a tired but happy group.

Barb Barr's had her open house the previous Saturday and the Rycroft farmers' market was that same Saturday...so most who attended had a good christmas sales season. Barb brought a copy of the news release she wrote and sent to local papers. She also brought the news articles that were written about her open house in the Spirit River Echo and the Peace Country Sun. She had good attendance at the open house. It was busy with buyers from across the Peace including: Hines Creek, Beaverlodge, and Grande Prairie. Of course, she was well supported at home, too. Barb's sales were really good this year! She had a draw and a survey to find out where people heard about her openhouse.

Kathy Meyer, Tara Sallis and Ann Toderian were all in the local Rycroft farmers market sale and they all did very well there. Having the Open House & the farmers' market Christmas sale on the same dayworked well. Most people who went to the one event then went to the other location, making their trip more worthwhile.

Heather Porrill is working on her commercial kitchen at home and is pleased with how the kitchen is

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coming along. She is not selling at farmers' markets as it's too much work with her lifestyle/lifestage. She is quite pleased with how her kitchen is coming along.

Kathy discussed the cost per sale of each unit of her product and what it was at each sale. She used the table cost+gas=cost of sales per unit. It went from 0.50 cents/unit at one sale (Hines Creek) to \$8.00/unit at Rycroft!! Spirit River was \$4/unit while it was \$3 at Grande Prairie. Rycroft's costs may look higher because many of those customers purchase from Kathy's home. Kathy is still at the Rycroft market because of the local promotion and to support the community.

This opened up a good discussion about costs for selling. It also brought up concerns about retail and commission sales. Apparently there is a store that has a number of our products and the value chain portion of the company has failed, but the store is still going. Gail has removed her product from the store as it wasn't selling and she wasn't getting paid.

Nutritional labeling was discussed. There is interest in taking the training to be ready for regulations coming into effect later in 2007.

Everyone was looking forward to rest and Christmas vacation.

Special thanks from Sherry Smith and Susan Meyer who are now putting the newsletter together. Don't forget – if you have problems, ideas or promotion needs, we will help as we are able.

Susan & Sherry

Grow West - North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Convention
February 12-17, 2007
Hyatt Regency in Calgary, Alberta



Interested in participating in this once in a lifetime opportunity in Calgary? Check out program at www.nafdma.com/Alberta.



Julie Gour, owner of Peace Country Baskets, is presented a Business Excellence Award for a promising new business by Martin Dupuis, président de la Fondation Fernando (left) and Randy Boissonneault, président de la Chambre économique de l'Alberta.

La Chambre économique de l'Alberta called Julie Gour, owner of **Peace Country Baskets** the Promising New Business for her commitment to local producers and bilingual customer service. "She helps producers and works hard at getting them to improve. Julie has the whole entrepreneurial spirit," said Rachelle Bergeron, economic development officer for La Chambre Economique.



For Peace Region agriculture entrepreneurs.

Learn Agri-Food

Network Team includes:
Tyla Klassen, Gail Briggs and
Jerry Kitt, as well as:

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Send submissions to Susan.

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.

RENEWAL.
the
way to
grow

Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

**Tuesday,
January 9, 2007**
Check times and venues at the right

Learn Agri-Food Meeting
Grande Prairie 1:15 to 3:15 pm at Gerty Sorensen's house (directions on Page 1)
Rycroft 1:15 to 3:15 p.m. at Alexander's Restaurant
High Prairie 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Pioneer Thresherman's Hall

**Nutrition
Labelling for
Food Vendors**

We're negotiating with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for the most up to date information on this topic and think we will do a two part workshop. Part one will be the regulations, timelines, what's in and what 'exempt'. Part two is planned to be a 'work' session so each participant goes home with the information for one product label.
Tell us you are interested... we'll do the rest.

**Sell to
Restaurants and
Food Service
A Dine Alberta
training session
January 23
Grande Prairie**

Meet a chef involved in the Dine Alberta program and hear the needs of a restaurant for your product. Anticipate making a relationship while brushing up on food safety regulations, contracting and learning what happens between the back door and the stove.
For more information call Cindy Cuthbert 780-538-5287 or Susan Meyer 780-538-5630

**January 24-25,
2007
Royal Executive
Inn
Nisku, AB**

AFMA Conference and Annual General Meeting – A great opportunity to talk to managers and vendors from across Alberta and western Canada. Interesting speakers will motivate you to have the best market year yet! Join the Alberta Farmers Market Association. Contact the AFMA office at 780- 644-5377

**February 12-17,
2007**

North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) - more information on Page 3
[\(www.nafdma.com/Alberta/\)](http://www.nafdma.com/Alberta/)
It only happens once! Alberta will be hosting the North American Farmers' Direct Annual meeting, conference and tour. This one week event brings together approximately 800 farm direct marketers from across Canada, USA, and the United Kingdom. Take part in discussions, networking and sessions that will stimulate your business and allow you to harvest the world for new ideas.

**Internet
Promotion and
Selling - What's
Involved?
March 13**

Grande Prairie or ... make us an offer. Wherever we find the first 8 people, we'll travel to you
Does your business need to be on the web? Is this the best or just the cheapest way to find buyers? Work on your business profile before this event so you have some of the pros and cons in your head before challenging the speakers to help you decide what, how much and where?
For more information call Elaine Stenbraaten 780-835-7531 or Susan Meyer 780-538-5630

We're on the web:
www.peacecountrycanada.com