

Network News

Discover, inspire, explore, harvest ... fresh ideas connecting agripreneurs in business

May-June 2008

Inside this issue:

Learn Agri-Food Network News	1-2
How Canadian is Our Food?	2
Collaboration Reaps Rewards	3
Dine Alberta: Savour Regional	3
Learn Agri-Food Events	4
Easy and Effective Peace Region Promotions	4

Learn Agri-Food Network Meetings:

Tuesday, June 10, 2008

Noon

The Learn Agri-Food meeting will be at the **Chinook Valley Golf Course**. (just west of Woking) .

See Page 4 for more meeting details.

It's free and everyone is welcome

Learn Agri-Food Network News

Karen and Cindy were joined by Laurel Kirsch, Peace Country Preserves and Jerry Kitt, First Nature Farms for the May Learn Agri-Food Network meeting in Grande Prairie. Since Laurel was host, the business conversation included a look at her new digs on Richmond Avenue.

Laurel made us home-made cream scones with clotted cream and her own jam! Yum....Yum! Dr. and Anita Janzen, who are regular customers, gave Laurel the scone recipe. "This place is our home away from home! We eat here as much as we do there," they tell people. Direct marketing requires many tools. Paying homage to customers by acknowledging their ideas is terrific.

Laurel was at the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market for 15 years. She opened "**Laurel's Peace Country Preserves**" downtown in January. "This is my happy, happy place...everyone calls my kitchen... my sandbox."

Laurel started with service from Tuesday to Saturday but is now open on Monday too, because

people knocked on the door all day long, while she was doing the "kitchen part of her business" trying to make her preserves & pickles. Jerry has been selling in Vancouver for a few years now. "The interest in organic food keeps growing" says Jerry, who ships sides of pork into Vancouver.

He still uses the WWOOF'ers (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms organization) for help around the farm. Jerry was the second farm in Alberta to sign up and it's grown to 30-40 cooperating farms. Countries around the world participate. Over 100 people from South Africa, Japan, and New Zealand have spent work time west of Hythe with Jerry and family.

"Language is hardly ever an issue, says Jerry. "We have such a variety of people, wanting to experience life on the farm, says Jerry" He listed examples such as a doctor of internal medicine, a couple undercover narcotic policemen from Germany (they stayed for a couple months), a personal fitness trainer from Australia and her husband who taught

about farming at a private school. "It's a practical application where the kids come out to a farm and work on it," Jerry added.

The group gave Laurel feedback on her new operation, including comment on the quiet for customers who enjoy conversation and the aromas produced by the food. In fact, both these things made Laurel re-think ideas she's had to sell other products such as cosmetics. The additional fragrance might not be the right 'note' for the nose, so to speak.

The Rycroft Learn Agri-Food meeting was held at Briggswood Country Preserves plant and hosted by Gail Briggs. This meeting produced lively conversation as well.

Gail, busy with family commitments had help from her sons. They are



Jerry Kitt visiting at Peace Country Preserves

Learn Agri-Food Network News cont'd



Gail Briggs showing off her new nutritional labeling.

now back in Saskatchewan working in the trades but good labour gave her time to develop a new product, pickled asparagus which the LAF group tasted. Mmmmm good! In addition, extra manpower created a boost on production and for a good stockpile of Gail's top sellers. A nice way to start the year.

Barb Barrs, Burnt River Clay, joyfully did a 'show and tell' with postcards from the exhibit sale of her work in Illinois. The eight month period of production and training with artist Steven Hill culminated in the 'show

and sale.' Barb says the whole affair was a considerable commitment of time and energy but that it was good for developing her inner voice or style for her pottery and artistic sense. We all could each remember that life includes 'learning and reflection' if we want both a better life and in the end, a better bottom line.

Just back from a selling trip to central Alberta, Soames Smith says he finds sales a challenge. Working with others to build a 'critical mass' for the whole chain from production, through

processing to marketing, was an important part of the conversation.

Tara Sallis, Birch Hills Bath Company, did a new batch of soap and brought samples. Tara's been so busy she was especially glad she made time to get to the meeting (day time is tough for her). She reported that she's been finding ways to minimize the waste and has produced a heart shaped guest soap. She expects to be busy this spring with the Wanham ploughing match in June – want something done? ask a busy person, they say.

How Canadian Is Our Food?

Did You Know?...

A 5% increase in customer retention can increase your profitability by 25-85%. Identify your most profitable customers and then develop a customer loyalty program as part of your Marketing & Sales planning.

Canadian grocery store shelves are lined with food products marked "Product of Canada" or "Made in Canada." The federal government first introduced these Canadian content food labels in the early 1980s. The guidelines require two basic criteria be met before manufacturers can use the "Product of Canada" and "Made in Canada" labels:

- the last substantial change of the goods must have occurred in Canada; and
- at least 51 per cent of the total direct costs of producing or manufacturing the goods are Canadian.

There is a plan to update and redefine the familiar "Product of Canada" and "Made in Canada" food labels to better reflect the true origins of products in the modern marketplace. It includes the following changes:

Product of Canada

The proposed guidelines for the use of this label shift the definition of "Product of Canada" from the direct cost or value of a product **to** focus on the contents and ingredients of a product. In order that a manufacturer be allowed to use the "Product of Canada" label, "all or virtually all" of the contents of the product must be Canadian.

Made in Canada

The term "Made in Canada" with a qualifying statement could apply to virtually every other product produced in Canada. Therefore, if a food product is manufactured or processed in Canada, regardless of the origin of the ingredients, it could use a "Made in Canada" label. Products would use either "Made in Canada from domestic and imported ingredients" or "Made in Canada from imported ingredients."

Give your feedback.

Visit:

www.healthycanadians.ca
before June 11, 2008 to have your say.

Collaboration Reaps Rewards

Collaboration is the name of the game for 15 Peace Country agripreneurs involved in the Ag and Food Distribution in the Peace project. The group identified efficient and economical shipping of products to market as a common business hurdle. Over the winter they worked with Brian Dumsday, a logistics consultant with QGI Consulting, to identify a made in the Peace solution to their distribution challenges.

Participating companies are small to medium sized and focus most of their sales and marketing efforts within the Peace. Generally, they meet their shipping needs using their own resources.

The group of 15 agripreneurs decided to proceed with two collaborative options:

- **Freight consolidation** between the Peace

Region and existing/future customers in Edmonton and Calgary which may result in reduced freight costs.

- **Coordinated purchasing** of selected packaging and raw materials which may result in reduced material/delivery costs from suppliers to the Peace Region or both.

Agripreneurs facing or anticipating transportation challenges are welcome to join the project. “We encourage agripreneurs with a collaborative mindset to join either one or both of the pilot projects,” says Barb Barrs, the creative force behind the beautifully crafted pottery of Woking’s Burnt River Clay. “I’m in it for a chance to be involved in the consolidated purchasing project. It makes sense to me to work as a group to try to

reduce the high cost of shipping packaging materials into the Peace. I like that Brian is looking at a couple of solutions. I’m looking forward to finding out whether it’s better for us to consolidate and place one big order with an existing supplier or look at contracting a new supplier.”

Call today to find out how the Ag and Food Distribution in the Peace project might benefit you. Dumsday will interview new participants over the next two weeks so if you want to join in, let us know now. Call Karen Goad (780-538-5629) or Susan Meyer for more information.



Distribution Producer Meeting—Ann Toderian, Heather Porrill, Eldine and Glenn Kjemhus.

Dine Alberta: Savour Regional Flavour

Regional cuisine advocates using quality locally grown ingredients, in union with the culture, geography, and history of Alberta. The "Dine Alberta: All Year Round" project, now in it's fifth year, is a stimulating way to showcase local agriculture products, family owned farms, and value added processing. It incorporates producers, processors, distributors, restaurants, chefs, media, and most importantly, the consumers. An *Alberta Regional Cuisine Sourcing Directory* has been developed that gives chefs or their product buyers and the public a source for purchasing a wide range of Alberta grown ingredients and/or value-added products. Visit

www.dinealberta.ca to find out more about participating in this unique program.



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

For Peace Region agricultural entrepreneurs. Learn Agri-Food Network Team includes: Gail Briggs and Jerry Kitt, as well as:

Alberta Agriculture & Food
Elaine Stenbraaten
Fairview
835-7531

Karen Goad
Grande Prairie
538-5629

Cindy Cuthbert
Grande Prairie
538-5287

Susan Meyer
Publisher
Grande Prairie
538-5630

Fax: 538-5288
susan.meyer@gov.ab.ca

Sherry Smith
Layout/Design
Grande Prairie
538-6208

sherry.smith@gov.ab.ca
Send submissions to Sherry.

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.

We're on the web:

www.peacecountrycanada.com

Look for Culture of Innovation and then Learn Agri-Food

Learn Agri-Food Events

Tuesday, June 10	Learn Agri-Food Network Meeting. Regional location—12:00 p.m. The Learn Agri-Food meeting will be at the Chinook Valley Golf Course. (just west of Woking) at Noon. Directions: from Highway # 2 go west on the Highway through Woking to the T Intersection and secondary Highway 731. Turn right and go 2 km north and turn into the Golf course. (east side of road). Golf Course and Campground's phone number to book golf or camping is: 780-774-3838. For more information, contact: Elaine Stenbraaten at 780-835-7531 Barb Barrs at 780-774-2184
Tuesday, June 10	Peace Value Added Food & Ag Association Annual meeting at 3 p.m. after the Learn Agri-Food meeting. (see above)
Tuesday September 9	Learn Agri-Food Meeting. Host site-TBA—1:30 p.m. to 3:30
Tuesday, December 9	Learn Agri-Food Meeting. Grande Prairie Provincial Building & Alexander's Restaurant—1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Tuesday, February 10, 2009	Learn Agri-Food Meeting. Grande Prairie Provincial Building & Alexander's Restaurant—1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 14, 2009	Learn Agri-Food Meeting. Host site-TBA—1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Easy and Effective Peace Region Promotions

Type something about your business and it will get into the Peace Country Sun on page 6. The Proudly Peace Full page is there for you.

To make it easy for us, and to ensure we say what you need, here are some ideas:

- 150-300 words, we will edit, re-write and make it exciting
- what's your product or service (as the buyer would name it)?
- what do customers say about your product?
- tell a story about how you started OR where you got the idea OR who you work with OR what passion you have OR something energetic

E-mail it to Susan Meyer

Making dreams happen

Can our childhood dreams come true? If we keep them in our heart and mind, work hard and keep our sights on the end in mind, they are can.

Sue King's dream was to have a small family farm just like her grandparents. As a new widow, Sue and Larry moved to the Peace region, settling in the Crooked Creek area where they got into the cattle and poultry business. Over time their family grew and their farm developed into a diversified undertaking. In 1998, they decided to move away from conventional to organic production. "Our goal is to have a health-giving, sustainable farm where we could make a living for our family and pass this opportunity on to our children," recalls Sue.

Their 250 acres is home to a small herd of cow-calf pairs, a flock of ewes and lambs, two sows, a bear, a bunch of laying hens and last, but not least, a herd of riding and work horses.

"We believe we must steward the land and animals God has entrusted to our care," continues Sue. "We achieve this by following the natural processes that have been established from the beginning of time."

This philosophy is echoed in the name of their operation, Harmony's Way Farm. In the summer the animals are rotated around their lush, fertile pastures. Winter brings everything into sheltered areas around the farm. The laying hens go happily about their business in warm, cozy, deep-bedded houses.

Animals create products that need to be sold. The Kings have tried many ways of marketing. When they

a diversified undertaking. In 1998, they decided to move away from conventional to organic production. "Our goal is to have a health-giving, sustainable farm where we could make a living for our family and pass this opportunity on to our children," recalls Sue.

Their 250 acres is home to a small herd of cow-calf pairs, a flock of ewes and lambs, two sows, a bear, a bunch of laying hens and last, but not least, a herd of riding and work horses.

"We believe we must steward the land and animals God has entrusted to our care," continues Sue. "We achieve this by following the natural processes that have been established from the beginning of time."

This philosophy is echoed in the name of their operation, Harmony's Way Farm. In the summer the animals are rotated around their lush, fertile pastures. Winter brings everything into sheltered areas around the farm. The laying hens go happily about their business in warm, cozy, deep-bedded houses.

Animals create products that need to be sold. The Kings have tried many ways of marketing. When they

Continued on Page 7

RENEWAL



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

