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1. Nordic Creamery Builds New Farmstead Specialty Dairy Plant

*By Jeanne Carpenter
DBIC Communications Director*

These days, award-winning artisan and specialty cheeses take most of the credit for putting Wisconsin on the map as America's Dairyland. But it's another growing category—the rise of farmstead creameries—that's becoming increasingly responsible for developing a new generation of dairy entrepreneurs.

While some dairy farmers choose to build new barns and add more animals to increase the size of their operation, a growing number of dairy farmers are instead building small creameries right on the farm, producing ice cream, butter, bottled milk, or yogurt directly from the milk of their cows, sheep, or goats. Not only does crafting an on-farm dairy product provide another source of revenue, in many cases it provides a different avenue to bring children—many of whom don't want to milk animals 365 days a year—back into the family business.

Since 2000, nearly a dozen Wisconsin farms have built on-farm creameries to produce fresh dairy products, and another one is about to join the ranks.



Al and Sarah Bekkum, owners of Nordic Creamery near Westby, Wisconsin, are putting the finishing touches on their new farmstead butter plant, where they plan to craft European-style traditional and seasonal butters made in small batches from the milk of their own cows. Al is confident the product will sell. He's been making seasonal butters off-site at Sassy Cow Creamery near Columbus, Wis., for the past year, and selling it at farmer's markets in Chicago.

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**Grand Opening
Farmstead Butter Plant**

**Friday, Aug. 19, 1 p.m.
with DATCP Secretary
Ben Brancel**

**Nordic Creamery
S2244 Langaard Lane,
Westby, WI**

**Open House:
Aug 19 - Aug 20
Noon - 4 p.m.
Plant Tours, Tastings,
Music**

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“From the get-go, people went crazy for it,” Al says. “They want a fresh butter that’s hand-packed, and they buy it like there’s no tomorrow.”

Nordic Creamery is looking forward to hosting the public at its new farmstead dairy plant grand opening on Friday & Saturday, August 19 - 20 from Noon to 4, but the farmstead retail store will be open to the public even sooner. Inside will be a vast array of Wisconsin products, including butter, ice cream and cheese made by Nordic Creamery. Butter varieties will include a farm-fresh sweet cream Summer Butter from April to October, a Harvest Butter made from November to March, a complete line of flavored cow’s milk butters, and eventually, goat’s milk butters, and possibly even mixed milk butters. Also offered will be Spesiell Kremen, a cultured butter churned at specific times of the year. Madison chefs are already lining up for the cultured butter, as its 85 percent butterfat content melts better for enhancing sauces and delicate desserts.

A 20-year veteran cheesemaker, Bekkum will continue to make his well-known goat’s milk and cow’s milk cheeses at K&K Cheese factory in Cashton, and one day, hopes to make a unique cheese at his own farmstead plant using only the milk of his future Norwegian Red Cattle. Bringing the rare breed to the United States is just one part in the Bekkums’ master plan. In the fall, Al will start milking about 25 dairy cows - a mixture of Holstein, Jersey and Ayrshire - and using that milk for his farmstead products. Within four years, he hopes to have every cow bred to a Norwegian Red Bull, and have a herd of Norwegian Red Cows. This will pave the way for the first-ever Wisconsin Farmstead Norwegian Red cheese.

Not only are the Bekkums planning future products, they’re also planning ahead for their family of six children, ranging in age from 4 to 17. Bekkum says building an on-farm creamery is a dream come true. “It allows us to work at home and have more time with the kids. We’re growing a family and a business that one day the kids can run if they want to stay on the farm. That’s what it’s all about,” he says.

2. Team Column: The Future of the Dairy Business Innovation Center



This month, we hear from the DBIC Board of Directors, consisting of **Patrick Geoghegan**, President; **John Umhoefer**, Vice President; **Sam Miller**, Secretary/Treasurer; **Steve Ehlers**; **Christopher Koetke**; **Tom Lyon**; **Ben Miller** and **Dean Sommer**. The Board addresses “The Future of the Dairy Business Innovation Center.”

Since 2004, the Dairy Business Innovation Center has sparked business success among dairy entrepreneurs, cheesemakers, buttermakers and dairy producers. It’s important for our clients and our partners throughout the food industry to understand our current fiscal situation.

Federal funding that has sustained DBIC since its inception in 2004 will end in the upcoming federal budget. DBIC will use existing dollars from USDA to continue limited operation through June 2012. This nonprofit Center, founded by Dan Carter, owes a debt of thanks to Wisconsin Senator Herb Kohl for his creative and dogged pursuit of funding for this dairy business incubator.

The future of DBIC lies in the pursuit of new funding resources. The Center’s Board of Directors and staff will pursue state funding, private foundations and industry support. DBIC is an organization facing a loss of core funding, but it is also a set of ideas and activities that the dairy industry will continue to need.

In the past seven years, DBIC has hosted seminars, funded targeted research and grants, and built public awareness of emerging craft cheeses, butters and ice cream. But what DBIC has done best is swarm businesses with its talented pool of business and marketing consultants.

In this consultant role, DBIC has provided the nuts and bolts of business-building – writing business plans and auditing business performance, arranging product R&D in cooperation with the Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research, designing labels, providing focus groups, finding markets and building networks.

Since Dan Carter teamed up with Senator Kohl, the Center has worked with 217 dairy clients. DBIC, working with partners including the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board and Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, assisted in the opening of 43 dairy processing plants and 92 plant additions.

DBIC will trim its programs for the coming 12 months to focus on consultant service to dairy clients. This direct, one-on-one activity has driven an extraordinary success rate among bold dairy entrepreneurs and launched countless new dairy products. The continued success of these dairy innovators is DBIC's legacy.

Expect more updates as DBIC pursues a new chapter in program funding. Your thoughts and ideas are most welcome. Please contact Norm Monsen at norm.monsen@wisconsin.gov.

3. Wisconsin Food Companies Invited to Midwest Buyers Mission

Wisconsin food companies interested in attending a Midwest Buyers Mission – expected to draw food buyers and importers from 22 world markets -- should register to attend by **July 11**. Sponsored by the Food Export Association of the Midwest USA, meetings will be held on July 26 at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Minneapolis, and July 28-29 in Chicago.



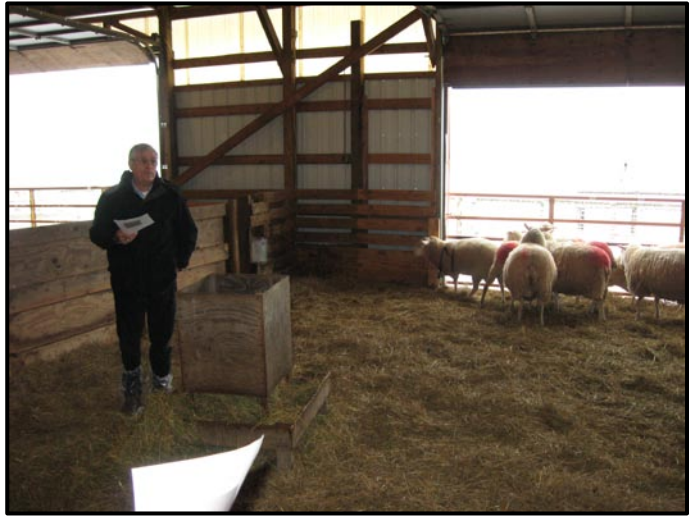
The Midwest Buyers Mission allows Midwest food companies to meet with buyers/importers from all over the world for a participation fee of only \$150. Companies can choose 25-30 minute pre-arranged meetings with up to 10 buyers/importers, who have been invited from Algeria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Mexico, Nicaragua, Palestine, Philippines, Singapore, Barataria-Trinidad & Tobago, the UAE, and Vietnam.

The event is optimal for any size food and ingredient company that already exports, and is an exceptional opportunity for small-to-medium companies who might be investigating export for the first time. New exporters are strongly encouraged to sign up early to take advantage of "Trade Event Preparation Service" (FREE individual assistance from an export educator) provided by Food Export Midwest, prior to the event.

Sign up for the event online today or to view a more detailed description of buyer profiles here: [Midwest Buyers Mission](#). Call Kim Hamilton at 217-782-5809 or kim.hamilton@illinois.gov or Brian Erickson at 651-201-6539 or brian.j.erickson@state.mn.us for more information.

4. 59th Spooner Dairy Sheep Day Set for August 20 in Wisconsin

Dairy farm profitability and lamb rearing are the two themes for this year's 59th meeting of the Spooner Sheep Day. Set for Saturday, Aug. 20 at the Spooner Agricultural Research Station of the University of Wisconsin, the day will include a presentation on profitability of dairy sheep operations by Dr. Larry Tranel, Iowa State Extension.



The program will also address challenges to rearing lambs and lamb marketing. Yves Berger, Spooner Ag Research Station, will address lamb survival in dairy sheep operations and Dave Thomas, UW-Madison, will address the genetics of lamb survival.

Claire Mikolayunas, UW-Madison Extension, will address rearing lambs from weaning to market and Dave Johnson, Equity Livestock Cooperative, will address the current lamb market.

Income from lamb sales can represent a significant portion of income on a dairy sheep operation. Shortages of lambs in both the U.S. and internationally have resulted in record lamb prices in 2011. It appears that the shortage of lamb will continue for at least the next few years resulting in a much improved economic situation for domestic lamb producers, experts say.

In addition to the above topics, the Wisconsin Sheep Dairy Cooperative will give an update on current and projected milk markets throughout the region, and a discussion session will be held for producers to suggest research topics to be conducted on-farm or at the Spooner Ag Research Station. Following speaker sessions, the sheep barn and milking facility will be open for a self-guided tour.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., with the formal program scheduled to end at 2:45 p.m. Attendance at the educational sessions of the Spooner Sheep Day is free. A lamb barbecue lunch served at noon costs \$8 for adults and \$5 for children under age 12.

The Spooner Agricultural Research Station is located in northwestern Wisconsin on Highway 70 just west of Highway 53 and east of the town of Spooner. For more information, contact Lorraine Toman at 715-635-3735, or email ltoman@wisc.edu. The complete program may be viewed at <http://fyi.uwex.edu/wisheepandgoat/>.

5. Upcoming Events

- **July 10-12: Summer Fancy Food Show. Washington, D.C.**
North America's largest specialty food & beverage event features 180,000 products including confections, cheese, coffee, snacks, spices, ethnic, natural, organic and more. A total of 2,400 exhibitors, with 80 countries represented and 24,000 attendees. More info: www.specialtyfood.com

- **July 16: All-Star Blue Ribbon Tasting. Wisconsin State Fair Park, West Allis, Wis.**
Join the Wisconsin State Fair Park Foundation for an All Star Blue Ribbon Tasting, celebrating Wisconsin specialty meats, cheeses and spirits. Taste more than 30 Wisconsin State Fair blue-ribbon specialty meats and cheeses, paired with complimentary award-winning Wisconsin beers and wines, plus a special State Fair dessert table. The event is a fundraiser for the Wisconsin State Fair Park Foundation and proceeds will help support youth programming and scholarships. Sponsored by the Wisconsin State Fair Dairy Promotion Committee. Info: blueribbontasting.com
- **July 24: Day on the Farm. Cross Plains, Wis.**
Enjoy a delicious meal of farm-fresh ingredients in a beautiful setting, as Dreamfarm partners with Buy Fresh Buy Local chefs to host a picnic-style meal and educational event. "Day on the Farm" features a farm tour, kids activities and a delicious lunch of fresh farm-raised ingredients. Learn about the sustainable practices of the farm from hosts Diana and Jim Murphy and family. Info: www.reapfoodgroup.org
- **August 3-6: American Cheese Society Annual Conference. Montreal, Quebec, Canada**
The beautiful city of Montréal in Québec, Canada will play host to ACS's 28th Annual Conference & Competition, marking the first time that the annual event will be held outside of the United States. More info: www.cheesesociety.org/conference.



The **Dairy Business Innovation Center** offers technical assistance to dairy producers and processors in developing value-added dairy products, business planning and market development. For more information, visit www.dbicusa.org or contact Jeanne Carpenter at 608-358-7837, email: jeanne@wordartisanllc.com.

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