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1. Two Wisconsin Food Companies Launch Retail Gourmet Dinners Made with Wisconsin Cheese & Local Ingredients

Two Wisconsin food companies are collaborating to launch a new retail product category of ready-to-heat gourmet meals made from locally-grown and produced Wisconsin ingredients.

RP's Pasta Company, Madison, and Renaissance Farm, Spring Green, unveiled seven gourmet dinners this week at Sentry Metcalf at Hilldale in Madison. The dinners are available in the frozen section and retail for less than \$8. Dinners range from Lemon Basil Pesto Ravioli, to Wisconsin Stuffed Acorn Squash, to Four Cheese Tortellini, to Wisconsin Macaroni & Cheese.

Wisconsin specialty cheeses, locally-grown vegetables and herbs, as well as locally-made fresh, gourmet pasta are featured in different dishes, with local ingredients listed right on the package.

"Our mission is to create and share flavorful, ready-to-eat gourmet dinners produced from foods grown and crafted right here in Wisconsin," said Mark Olson, President of Renaissance Farms. "We know more families want to buy local foods to support their neighboring farms and strengthen their communities. This line of dishes is a great way for folks to savor Wisconsin's growing season."



The Wisconsin-based, ready-to-heat frozen dishes include a variety of local ingredients, including:

- Aged Cheddar cheese crafted at Hook's Cheese in Mineral Point, Wis.
- Butter Käse cheese crafted at Cedar Grove Cheese in Plain, Wis.
- Bottled milk and cream produced at Sassy Cow Creamery in Columbus, Wis.
- Butter made at Grassland Dairy in Greenwood, Wis.
- Parmesan, Asiago, Mozzarella and Ricotta cheese from Grande Dairy, based in Brownsville, Wis.
- Gorgonzola crafted at Wisconsin Farmers Union in Montfort, Wis.
- Feta cheese made at Carr Valley Cheese, LaValle, Wis.
- Gourmet fresh pasta crafted at RP's Pasta in Madison, Wis.

- Herbs, olive oils and pesto from Renaissance Farm, Spring Green, Wis.
- Butternut Squash from Sutter Farm, Mt. Horeb, Wis.
- Carrots, bell peppers and garlic from a variety of Wisconsin farms

The line of local food dishes from Renaissance Farms was developed by Chef Joel Girard, of Madison. Olson plans to collaborate with different chefs, farms and cheesemakers to develop future lines of ready-to-heat dishes. The first four dishes launched this week include:

- Lemon Basil Pesto Ravioli with Roasted Garlic Cream Sauce
- Stuffed Sweet Bell Peppers with Cedar Grove Butter Käse
- Butternut Squash Ravioli with Montforte Gorgonzola Cream Sauce
- Wisconsin Stuffed Acorn Squash with Carr Valley Feta

The line of dishes from RP's Pasta was created by owner Peter Robertson, a master pasta maker. The first three dishes in the RP's Pasta line include:

- Macaroni & Cheese made with Hook's Three-Year Cheddar
- Four Cheese Tortellini with Basil & Tomato Sauce, paired with Local Buttered Carrots
- Four Cheese Ravioli with Roasted Garlic Alfredo, paired with Local Buttered Carrots

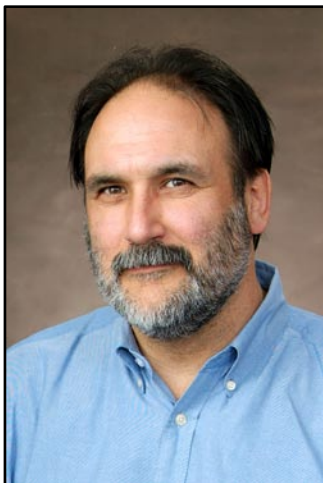
"As the owners of local food companies, Mark and I work with fresh, wholesome ingredients grown and crafted by Wisconsin farmers and cheesemakers every day," said Robertson. "This line of ready-to-heat dinners allows us to share our passion for local foods with the people we love best – our customers."

For more information about the new line of local food gourmet dinners, contact Mark Olson, Renaissance Farm, 608-588-2230 or Peter Robertson, RP's Pasta, 608-257-7216.

For more information about each company, visit: www.renfarm.com and www.rpspasta.com

The local foods project is supported by the following organizations: Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, UW Extension, Thrive, Wisconsin Grocers Association and the Dairy Business Innovation Center.

2. DBIC Monthly Message: Think Green When You Go Green



This month, we hear from **Jim Gage**, DBIC Grant Writer. Jim tells us: "Think Green When You Go Green."

For anyone involved in dairy these days, there are an increasing number of options to "go green". There are more manure digesters across the country, new equipment and processes often consider electricity and heat savings, and new construction is designed to maximize energy savings.

When I think green, I think about two things: the environmental issues AND the potential profitability of the project. Although this sounds contradictory, there are programs and ideas to make sure that you are greenx2. A few ideas to consider:

When a green opportunity presents itself, do your business homework and

make sure that the return on your investment makes sense to your business. Look at all of the grants, low interest loans, and tax breaks (some described below) and your investment, compare it to the amount of energy that you will save, and then calculate how long that it will take to cover your costs. If, for instance, energy efficient windows or lighting, or a solar water heating project costs you \$50,000 but will fully pay back the investment in 2-3 years and then last for another 10 years, that's money in the bank.

The USDA Rural Development Office has recently combined programs to create the "Rural Energy for America" Program. All rural businesses, dairy producers and processors included, are eligible for the program. There are grants and low-interest loans for both energy efficiency and alternative energy projects that can cover up to 75% of the initial investment (25% grant and 50% loan). From my conversations with the Wisconsin USDA office, it is assumed that the rules for this program will be available sometime next month, and proposals will be due in late winter.

The first call for anyone considering an energy efficiency program should be to their utility company to understand what grant or in-kind programs are available to them in their area. Many utilities work with Focus on Energy in Wisconsin – this organization can advise on planning, energy audits, small grants, etc. For more information, see <http://www.focusonenergy.com/tfm/>.

There are state and federal tax breaks for companies involved with energy projects. As I understand the Department of Commerce rules, the Dairy Manufacturing Facility Investment Tax Credit can also be applied to investments made on new construction and equipment that are energy efficient.

One consideration that all companies must make is whether the green technology is proven or whether it is still in the research and development phase. Proven technologies, and stable companies that install and service the systems, often provide a lower-risk investment option than new technologies. However, being part of an R&D system that is new and exciting often garners media attention and/or may be supported through outside grants or in-kind expertise from the company or through a university. As in all business decisions, the amount of tolerable risk of a company's owner comes into play.

Lastly, adding green technologies to your company's story can often have a very positive effect on your brand and provide a new and attract story for retailers and consumers alike. Similar to when a new product is released, it is important that you create an appropriate press release or add a page to your website when the project is operational so that your story is well communicated to one and all.

The take-home message is that energy savings have an immediate effect on your bottom line profitability. And more money in the business allows you to be more innovative as a dairy business. Go green.

3. WMMB to Present New Resources for Cheese Companies at November Expo

Did you know the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board works with more than 200 retailers to run promotions featuring Wisconsin cheese? Learn how to take advantage of all WMMB programs and resources, plus meet each of the WMMB retail regional managers by attending one of two upcoming WMMB Expos: Nov. 17 at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison and Nov. 19, at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. Both events run from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Each expo starts with a short presentation about new programs and promotions exclusively for Wisconsin cheese companies. The event then opens up for companies to talk one-on-one with WMMB staff and

personally learn how access resources, including retail promotions, market research and technical support. Be sure to bring your sales staff to have them meet their counterparts at WMMB and bring along your sell sheets so WMMB's regional sales managers are up-to-date on all of your product offerings.

The event is an excellent opportunity to learn more about regional dairy markets, says Linda Lee, Swiss Cheese Manager at Swiss Valley Farms. "I attend every year to find out what new programs are available to me, and to meet the regional sales managers. It is an extremely helpful event and gives me ideas of what companies I should be marketing our products to. I plan on going again this year."

Register by Nov. 12 by contacting Amanda Ritchie at aritchie@wmmb.org or Cathy Hart at chart@wmmb.org or call 800-373-9662.

4. Industry News

- ❖ **Wisconsin Dairy Artisans in the News:** Several of Wisconsin's dairy artisans are enjoying the national spotlight this month. Congratulations to:

Sue Huber, Sibby's Ice Cream, Viroqua, Wis. Sibby's was just named one of "America's Best Ice Creams" by Forbes Traveler.com. Here's what writer Jennifer Murphy had to say: "For purity, nobody does it better than organic ice cream entrepreneur Sue Huber, who runs Sibby's Organic Zone Ice Cream Parlor in Viroqua, Wis. Made on her family's homestead farm with organic milk from local sources, it's not hard to see why Sibby's has become synonymous with good, old-fashioned wholesomeness. This is ice cream at its best: pure, simple and made with love."



Marieke Penterman, Holland's Family Farm, Thorp, Wis. Marieke's Gouda is one of four exclusive cheeses to be featured by Williams-Sonoma in its new "American Farmstead Cheese Collection." Marieke's Gouda joins two cheeses from Vermont: La Fleurie of Willow Hill Farm, and Vermont Ayr of Crawford Family Farm; as well as Capriole O'Banon, crafted by Judy Schad of Indiana. Williams-Sonoma reports: "This quartet of cheeses was selected for us by Pastoral, Chicago's preeminent cheese specialists. They receive the cheeses directly from the farms, then age the wheels before cutting them to order. These cheeses demonstrate the exceptional hands-on skill of American artisanal cheesemakers."

5. Upcoming Important Dates

For a complete listing of upcoming events, visit: www.dbicusa.org and click on Calendar of Events

- **Nov. 17 & Nov. 19. WMMB Expo. Madison & Green Bay, Wis.**
Learn how to take advantage of all WMMB programs and resources, plus meet each of the WMMB retail regional managers by attending one of two upcoming WMMB Expos: Nov. 17 at the

Alliant Energy Center in Madison and Nov. 19, at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. Both events run from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Each expo starts with a short presentation about new programs and promotions exclusively for Wisconsin cheese companies. The event then opens up for companies to talk one-on-one with WMMB staff and personally learn how access resources, including retail promotions, market research and technical support. Be sure to bring your sales staff to have them meet their counterparts at WMMB and bring along your sell sheets so WMMB's regional sales managers are up-to-date on all of your product offerings. Register by Nov. 12 by contacting Amanda Ritchie at aritchie@wmmb.org or Cathy Hart at chart@wmmb.org or call 800-373-9662.

- **Dec. 5-6: Connecting Threads Conference for Women. Wisconsin Dells, Wis.**

Connecting Threads, Weaving the Fabric of Agriculture, is a conference for farm women and women farmers in Wisconsin Dells. It is designed to help women farmers thrive by learning risk management tools that can help them analyze possible loss areas of their enterprise, help them connect with resources, and provide valuable networking opportunities with other women farmers. Conference topics include financial, production, marketing, and social risk management tools. Women farmers who are the primary decision makers on their farm are invited to attend. These women farmers may have established enterprises, be beginning farmers, or are exploring farming as an occupation. Professionals who want to work with women farmers are also invited to attend. For more info, call 1-800-942-247 or visit <http://datcp.state.wi.us/registration/wfarming.jsp>

- **Dec. 10: Arlington Dairy Day. Arlington, Wis.**

The 12th Annual University of Wisconsin-Arlington Dairy Day is an opportunity for dairy producers and service industry professionals to learn how University of Wisconsin research can help increase dairy herd profitability, health and productivity. Arlington Dairy Day is sponsored by the UW-Extension Dairy Team and the UW-Madison Department of Dairy Science. The program showcases the latest dairy-related research findings from various departments of the UW-Madison College of Ag & Life Sciences. Brochures with registration form, map and program details are available from your county UW-Extension Office. Registration fee is \$25 if sent by Nov. 26 and \$35 per person after that date or paid at the door. The fee includes refreshments, lunch and program proceedings.



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.