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1. Autumn Marks Release for Otter Creek Organic Seasonal Cheddar

How do you tell it's autumn in Wisconsin? The evenings start to cool, the leaves begin to turn, and Otter Creek Organic Farm releases its raw milk Fall Seasonal Cheddar.

Even in Wisconsin, a state regaled for its cheddar heritage, Otter Creek Organic Farm's seasonal cheddars stand out. Available in select retail stores across the nation, the farm's raw milk Fall Seasonal Cheddar bears a striking label telling the story of this award-winning cheese. It starts with the beautiful clean grasses of Otter Creek's organic fields, where 180 farmstead Holsteins graze and produce flavorful milk. It ends with that same milk being used to make cheddars tasting like the seasons in which they were crafted.

Made locally by Master Cheesemaker Bob Wills at nearby Cedar Grove Cheese in Plain, Wis., and released just this week, Otter Creek's Fall Organic Cheddar is now 11 months old (each season's cheese is aged and released one year later for peak flavor). So how exactly does Fall Cheddar taste?

"The cows that produced this cheese grazed on Wisconsin pastures of mature rye, alfalfa, clover and late season annuals," says Bartlett Durand, of Otter Creek Organic Farm. "As the grass peaks in flavor, so does the milk. Good milk makes good cheese, and although the strength of the seasonal cheddars depends primarily on the amount of time they are aged, the Fall is relatively the strongest flavor, and the one my cheesemaker most prefers."



Otter Creek Cheddar has gained recognition at several prestigious award competitions, winning ribbons at both the 2007 U.S. Cheese Championship Contest and the 2007 American Cheese Society Competition. Retailers have also recognized its unique taste, showcasing Otter Creek Seasonal Cheddars in promotions and educational pieces, often pairing two seasons with the always-available Pesto cheddar.

So how does a seasonal cheddar come into being? It began with Otter Creek Organic Farm owners Gary and Rosie Zimmer, who started in the 1970s, raising their children on the land and instilling in them an interest in agriculture and conservation. In 1994, with their son, Nicholas, they purchased Otter Creek farm in the rolling hills of southwest Wisconsin.

Originally a crop farm, the family decided to move into organic dairy and bought 40 dairy cows. Nicholas Zimmer and three other families now run Otter Creek Organic Farm, a 1,200-acre farmstead that includes 180 Holsteins, pastured-raised beef and hogs, free-range poultry, and Local Choice Farm Market, where Otter Creek Farm products are sold locally.

In March, the Zimmers were named the 2008 MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year by the board of directors of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service. In addition, the farm has been recognized by national environmental organizations for its role in protecting wildlife, caring for the environment, treating livestock humanely, and engaging in fair, safe labor practices. Gary Zimmer is today an international speaker sought after for his unique research in how to farm sustainably using mineralized, balanced agriculture.

For more information about Otter Creek Organic Farm, its farming practices and its seasonal cheeses, visit: www.ottercreekorganicfarm.com.

2. DBIC Monthly Message: 50 Newsletters in Five Years



This month, we hear from **Jeanne Carpenter**, DBIC Communications Director. Jeanne reflects on the beginning of the Dairy Business Innovation Center and on the people who continue to help rebuild Wisconsin's dairy industry.

This month's newsletter marks Issue No. 50 for the Dairy Business Innovation Center. When I stop to think about all the Wisconsin companies, products and events I've had the privilege of writing about in the past five years, it dawns on me that this issue – No. 50 -- is a true testament to the risks, challenges and successes taken on by Wisconsin dairy entrepreneurs.

It was exactly five years ago this week when I was first called into a lunch time "off the clock" meeting with Norm Monsen, a dairy development specialist at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and Dan Carter, a venerable legend who had just retired from the specialty cheese marketing business. At the time, I was working as an LTE (limited term employee) at DATCP. I had no specific credentials to my name and virtually no background in dairy. But my farm girl background must have shown through, because Norm and Dan let me in on a plan – with the leadership of Will Hughes, an administrator at DATCP, and Senator Herb Kohl, who was working on securing funding for this as-of-yet-un-named venture, they were actively forming an organization to help Wisconsin dairy entrepreneurs develop and market artisan cheeses and value-added dairy products.

As I recall, my first question was: what is artisan cheese? – and let me just say, in my own defense, five

years ago, that wasn't such a strange question to ask in Wisconsin. We had a handful of farmstead folks up and running, and those making artisan cheeses hadn't yet entered the media spotlight. My second question was: how do I help? Looking back, I now realize it was a leap of faith to jump on a small bandwagon that had no money, no name, no organization and no identified team. But all it took – and I know many of you reading this will understand what I mean when I say it -- was one conversation with Dan Carter to realize that his passion and commitment alone would make it work. During the next six months, we went on to assemble a team of 20 of the finest dairy consultants in the world – many of whom signed on in the beginning with no contract, no pay, and only a promise of good things to come. But we all had faith. We had faith in the Wisconsin dairy industry and we had a hunch that if we built it, they would come.

And come they did. In fact, they keep coming. In the past five years, 161 farmers, cheesemakers, and dairy entrepreneurs have knocked on our virtual doors. We've sat down with each on a one-to-one basis, learning of their dreams, their goals, and then figuring out how to partner with them to accomplish each and every one. We've worked with dozens of industry partners, plugging into their expertise and services for clients.

Most importantly, we've made friends and built meaningful relationships along the way. Coming from a previous career in the fast-paced corporate world, I was always amazed when the first question from Dan Carter when he saw a client was not: "How's business?" Rather, it was and continues to be: "How are you? How is your family?" After those questions are answered – often at length -- then, and only then, does he talk business. I've come to appreciate that approach more than anything else in the past five years. It's led me to create a Cheese Underground blog where I enjoy sharing the stories of artisan cheesemakers in Wisconsin. It's helped me share with all of you the countless successes of farmers and cheesemakers who took the plunge and built a new dairy plant or created a new product. And it's helped all of us rally together and reclaim Wisconsin as America's true Dairyland.

I hope you all are looking forward to reading these newsletters in the future, because I'm sure planning on the DBIC sticking around to generate another 50 issues in the next five years. There is never a shortage of new things to write about, and for that, I thank YOU, the dairy industry. On Wisconsin!

3. Wisconsin Dairy Companies Capture Fair Share of Grant Monies

Of \$19.7 million recently awarded in 2008 Value Added Producer Grants, 17 Wisconsin companies – the most of any state -- captured \$3.3 million in monies to grow their businesses. Several companies recognized were dairy businesses, and the DBIC is proud to congratulate the following dairies on their grant awards:

- Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese: \$300,000
- Hedrick, Larry & Clara: \$17,840
- Hidden Springs Creamery: \$96,094
- Kelley Farm: \$17,910
- Koepke Farms: \$14,000
- Next Generation Organic Dairy: \$25,000
- Otter Creek Organic Farm: \$146,916
- Sassy Cow Creamery: \$300,000
- Westby Cooperative Creamery: \$300,000



The DBIC was proud to partner with five of these companies and help write their successful VAPG grants.

If you are you looking for ways to develop or expand your agricultural business, then plan now to attend one of two workshops to help farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs develop strategies to access state and federal grants. Attendees will learn how to successfully submit a Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG), an Agricultural Development and Diversification Grant (ADD), and The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program application. These programs provide research and development, planning and working capital funds to farmers, and farmer-based enterprises to develop and implement ventures. Cost is \$10 and includes lunch and materials. Training workshops are scheduled:

- **Tuesday, Oct. 21:** 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Heckrodt Wetland Reserve Nature Center in Menasha, Wis. To register, contact: Fred Depies at fkdepies@charter.net; 920-418-2718 or Glacierland RC&D at 920-465-3006.
- **Friday, Nov. 7:** - 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Washington Town Hall in Eau Claire, Wis. To register, contact: Pam Herdrich at Pam.Herdrich@wi.usda.gov or 715-834-9672 or River Country RC&D at 715-834-9672 or 800-226-9672.

The Dairy Business Innovation Center is committed to assisting clients with grant proposals. Given the complexity of grants, DBIC recommends any eligible client contact Norm Monsen at 608-224-5135 as soon as possible to discuss the timeline and requirements for assistance this year. Specifically, any clients requesting DBIC assistance with a VAPG working capital grant must complete their Business Plan and Feasibility Study by Jan 1, 2009.

5. Industry News

- ❖ **Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium:** As the dairy sheep industry continues to grow in numbers and recognition in North America, so does its annual conference. After 13 years of holding the symposium in regions surrounding the Great Lakes, this year's event will highlight the emerging dairy sheep industry in the southeastern United States. The meeting will be held Oct. 30 – Nov. 1 in Maryville, Tennessee, with the early registration deadline on Oct. 15.

Learn practical information for potential producers, hear talks from scientists, sheep milk processors and dairy sheep producers, and enjoy tours of three operating dairy sheep farms and a farmstead sheep milk processing plant. The featured international speaker will be Dr. Gabriel Leitner, a mastitis researcher from the National Mastitis Reference Center of Israel. During the symposium, panel discussions will include beginning dairy sheep production and sheep cheese marketing. Additional topics to be discussed include affinage (cheese aging), the benefit of dietary dairy fats, the effect of handling and thawing frozen sheep milk on cheese making properties, updates on the regulation of sheep milk shipment, and the economics of converting a cow dairy into a sheep dairy. The event is sponsored in part by the Dairy Sheep Association of North America, with major financial support from the Babcock Institute of International Dairy Research and Development of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and industry sponsors. More info: <http://www.dsana.org> or contact Claire Mikolayunas at mikolayunas@wisc.edu, phone: 608-332-2889.



5. Upcoming Important Dates

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

- **Oct. 4: Making the Most out of Goat Milk, Madison, Wis.**

Dr. William Wendorff, Professor Emeritas, University of Wisconsin-Madison dairy food scientist, will speak during World Dairy Expo on getting the most out of goat milk at the Monona Room, Alliant Center, from 10 a.m. to noon. The event is sponsored by the American Dairy Goat Association, the Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association and DATCP.

- **Oct. 11: Dairy Goat Value-Added Field Day. Mt. Horeb, Wis.**

Ethel and James Jenson will feature tours of the Jenson licensed farm kitchen, milk house where three separate bulk tanks cool milk from the three species milked on the farm (cows, goats, sheep), the barn, farmstead whey management system, and farm store. Ethel Jenson is a licensed cheese maker and has developed her own unique recipes utilizing mixtures of the milk produced on her farm. She makes cheeses at a nearby licensed plant and sells the cheese at her farm store. The field day is free, but participants are urged to register in advance so that sufficient seating and refreshments are available. Attendees can bring their own lunch to picnic or can buy lunch at the farm store. The day will end with apple cider and cheese-tasting of Ethel's cheeses and a walk to the top of her hill to view Tyrol Basin and Blue Mounds. To register for this event, email jeanne.meier@wi.gov or call 608-224-5121. View the event agenda and directions at

<http://www.dbicusa.org/planningoptions/calendar+of+events/default.asp> .



- **Oct. 17-19: Madison Food & Wine Show. Madison, Wis.**

This year's 7th Annual Madison Food & Wine Show is Madison's premier gourmet tasting event, offering the opportunity to sample the best food – including Wisconsin artisan and specialty cheeses, and the finest wines from throughout the area. For more info, visit <http://www.madisonfoodandwineshow.com/>

- **Oct. 31 - Nov 1: Focus on Goats & Annual Caprine Field Day. Merrimac, Wis.**

The Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture will combine forces to hold the 2008 Focus on Goats Conference and the Annual Caprine Field Day back to back in 2008. For information on the event and how to register, download the event brochure at: <http://www.dbicusa.org/planningoptions/calendar+of+events/default.asp>

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.