Did You Know?

During the Great Minnesota Get-Together attendees enjoy some pretty fine fair-food, including deep fried cheese curds. This year, amaze your friends with these Minnesota State Fair cheese curd facts...

- Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery has been supplying cheese curds to the Minnesota State Fair for 33 years, proving a quality product never goes out of style!
- 55 tons of our all natural cheddar cheese curds head to the fair each year. Picture this... that would fill 110,000 of our 1-lb bags! How long would that many cheese curds last at your house?
- Vendors pick up their cheese curd orders daily during the nearly 2-week long event and serve them up to customers that day. Now that’s fresh!
- Each year there’s a fear among fair-goers that the cheese curds will run out. But, there’s no need to worry. The fair’s cheese curd vendors have a long track-record for accurately predicting their cheese curd needs. However, should the unexpected happen, we’re on standby and are ready to supply more, if needed.
- Last year’s event was an attendance record-breaker with 2,046,533 people attending. Will they break a record again in 2019?
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Regardless of whether your family heads to the Minnesota State Fair, there’s a part of you at the event. Thanks to your hard work and dedication to quality, over 2 million attendees get to enjoy the most prized and delicious of all fair foods!

See You at the Fair!

Follow us on Facebook! /EllsworthCheese
Looking Back, Looking Ahead

By Paul Bauer, CEO, Manager paulb@ellsworthcreamery.net

September 1, 2019, marks the start of my twelfth year at Ellsworth. Let’s take a look back to see where we were and where we may be in our future.

Back in 2007, the profit numbers came from these sources (in order of income): Interest income, Grade A milk sales, sweet whey powder, bulk curds, and just above breakeven on barrels. The store/retail curds were too small to list.

Flash forward to today, we have been through a lot of changes. In 2019 the approximate main drivers in profit are (listed in order of income): Curds (including retail, food service, and bulk), Processed Cheese, milk sales for manufacturing, retail cuts of cheese, and we minimize our losses on bulk cheese and commodity products.

Just like in the past decade, Ellsworth needs to be prepared to change and do so quickly. Milk sales are a prime example of that. A year ago milk was plentiful and premiums were a negative to Class III. Today we are getting long term premiums to Class III, but we need to be prepared to take the milk back should the premiums go away. Our co-products of cream, condensed whey, WPC and sweet whey, and small curd product could all change should the market conditions move. Again, we need to be prepared for that.

Our curd products are facing more competition as we continue to have success. We are aware of at least three companies trying to sell curds as a major part of their business. To combat this and remain ahead of the competition, we will continue to expand our offerings to customers to meet their needs in size, flavor, function, and packaging. A prime example is our frozen breaded cheese curds, which is a brand extension.

On the sales side, Ellsworth will need to push hard into cut cheese. We need to offer more varieties and sizes demanded by new trends. This may take a lot or little capital depending on the project.

We have some pieces of equipment that have been in place for 27 to 50 years that will need to be addressed. These units are a major part of the cheese process so they cannot be shut down and swapped out; rather we need to build space to accommodate them. This will take years to implement but the planning will take place over the next few months and years.

To meet the new needs of the Creamery we will be putting new human and financial capital in place. The projects will be bigger and more complex. However, our long-term success depends on moving forward and not stopping.

The Creamery and farmer will face more pressure from outside influences. The world is looking to have product produced with an ever-decreasing carbon footprint or produced on a farm/plant that is environmentally sound. The social activists are pressuring to have audits of plant and pay and benefit practices on the farm. There is even a small trend to pay farmers a fair price as they do for some coffee! Will Fair-Trade Milk be the next label change?

I expect in the next 10 years the changes will be faster, more expensive, and more restrictive. We handled the past 109 years of changes we can handle the next 10 with a little planning and a good attitude.

Lehmann: Quick Pitch Winner

Please join us in congratulating Emily Lehmann, Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery Quality Assurance Supervisor. Her presentation on the effects of secondary listeria contamination in cheese won first place at the WISys Quick Pitch State Final on July 22.

The WISys Quick Pitch competition allows students to hone their communication skills and increase exposure for their research and ideas. The competitors race the clock to expertly explain their project in three minutes or less to a panel of judges.

“Listeria monocytogenes is a dangerous pathogen that causes the serious, and even deadly illness, listeriosis. Contamination of ready to eat food such as cheddar cheese is a huge concern in the spread of this pathogen,” according to Lehmann’s presentation abstract.

“Emily’s knowledge and passion stood out during the presentation on stage,” said WISys President Arjun Sanga.

“Explaining the value of your research and doing it succinctly is difficult under normal conditions, but Emily was completely composed in front of a crowd of more than 200 UW System faculty, staff, and students.”

“We’re very proud of Emily and her project. Food safety is very important to us all and this research can help us better understand what makes a great safe cheese product.”

LPC Bacteria Data Study

Over the next 3 months, the Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery will be gathering data on LPC bacteria from all par-tron farms. This information will be used to determine what, if any, issues we have in lab pasteurized counts and whether sufficient cooling and/or farm conditions impact counts.

As a general rule, counts greater than 200,000 (listed on your weekly quality card as 200) are a caution. Counts greater than 500,000 (listed on your weekly quality card as 500) are an issue that should be addressed with your field staff representative.

The Curd Wagon, our twist on the popular food truck concept, is drawing crowds to our parking lot in Ellsworth again this summer. A new addition, the old ski platform has been transformed into a patio for seating and eating. Contemporary wind sails give shade and offer a welcoming space for guests. Plans for the future include updates to tables and chairs and greenery. Kudos to our staff members who planned and implemented this transformation! Check it out on your next visit!

More Cheese PLEASE!

The fall season makes us think of apples, and there’s no better complement to all your favorite apple delicacies than Wisconsin cheese. That’s the inspiration behind a fall fun and food! Our state ranks second in the international market.

Growing Wisconsin magazine and Thumb through the latest issue of the magazine for fall fun and food! Bring the entire family for a day of food! We invite you to the kids, too. We invite you to there will be cheese! Activities for sundaes, and more! And yes, brats, caramel apple ice cream, apple cider, apple cinnamon pancakes, and even deadly illness, Listeriosis. We’re very proud of Emily and her project. Food safety is very important to us all and this research can help us better understand what makes a great safe cheese product.

The Great Wisconsin Cheese Block Party gave participants the opportunity to taste and offer feedback on a variety of cheese curd flavors not yet available for mass retail sale. In addition, 25 other Wisconsin-made cheeses, including our own from our Blaser’s and Antonella lines, were tasted. It’s rare to have a collection of unique cheeses that is under their own name. ‘The Great Wisconsin Cheese Block Party’ is now known as the ‘Great Wisconsin Cheese Block Party’ and ‘The Great Wisconsin Cheese Block Party’ for sampling all in one place! Needless to say, this special event was a hit!

Of course the darlings of the festival are the deep fried kind served up at the Cheese Curd Central booth in addition to the Natural flavor, and our exclusive Cinna-mon Sugar dessert curds. Jalapeno Bacon debuted as the specialty flavor for 2019. As you can imagine, the crowds went wild!

This event is a major way we promote our signature product and generated exposure for our retail store, too! 85% of event attendees were from our target metro Twin Cities market! www.CheeseCurdFestival.com

ECC Featured in Growing Wisconsin Magazine

Thumb through the latest issue of Growing Wisconsin magazine and you’ll see some familiar faces. Our creamery was featured in an article celebrating the strides being made in international Wisconsin dairy exports! Our state ranks second nationally in the export of whey and cheese and Ellsworth was referenced as a major exporter with a bright and growing future in the international market.

Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery

Dairy Proud! For Over 100 Years.