

Women of the Farm Event

Save the Date!
Saturday, January 23, 2021
1pm-2pm

To be held in the comfort of your home

The date is set for our 7th annual Women of the Farm event—although, the event will have a new format this year. While it's always wonderful to get together, due to the uncertainty of these times, we have made the decision to hold the event virtually this year.

As usual, a lineup of special guest speakers will share updates from Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, hold Q & A, and discuss other topics of interest to our patron farm women.

We'll be providing the snacks! For the first 100 who register, a mini-cheese board will be delivered by your milk hauler prior to the event. Provide your own beverage and we'll have the makings of a fun and informative online gathering! Yes, there will be prizes, too. You'll want to be present on this online event to win!

More details and your official invitation will be coming your way soon, along with instructions to register online (watch your email and your milk checks). For now, fire up the computer, check the Wi-Fi, and circle Saturday, January 23, 2021 on the calendar!

**We look forward to seeing you...
online!**

— ❄ —

MAY YOUR HOLIDAYS

Be Delicious

— ❄ —



Make your holiday shopping easy.

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232 North Wallace Street
Ellsworth, WI 54011
(715) 273-4311

www.ellsworthcheese.com



November 2020

2020 Grants and Programs Provide \$2.5 Million in Value to Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery



Artist rendition: Ellsworth's Menomonie production facility.

Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery has been seeking out funding in the form of federal and state grants. We're thrilled to announce that we have been the recipient of several grants this year—over \$1.4 million in total—that will help in expanding market share, as well as our expansion project in Menomonie, WI.

In addition to negotiating a lucrative land purchase in the Menomonie Industrial Park, we have been awarded Tax Increment Financing (TIF) credits from the City of Menomonie, a cash grant for completion of our building, and a small continuation grant as we complete each growth phase of the Menominee facility.

At the state-level, we have been awarded a Wisconsin Economic Development Tax Credit of \$750,000 for workforce expansion and retention in Ellsworth's Menomonie location. We have had success with this grant program in the past.

Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery received a Federal USDA Grant to assist in our Halal certification. Halal is an Islamic term that means lawful or permitted. Halal certification is a process which ensures the features and quality of our product meets the rules established

by the Islamic Council that allow the use of the mark Halal.

The procedure for obtaining this certification can be extensive and costly, including audits, testing, and sampling. However, this certification will open new markets for our products, particularly our processed cheeses, cheese curds, and specialty cheeses from the Comstock and Menomonie plants.

In addition, we have been awarded a Specialty Cheese Grant to market one of our newest products, freeze-dried cheese curds. What makes this product especially exciting is that it is an ideal product for export. The freeze-dried process allows us to expand our sales beyond that which would typically be feasible due to the need for refrigeration.

Combined, these grants and tax credits become significant as we look at the overall cost of the Menomonie plant project and new product releases, and how to best manage costs for our patron-owners. Including the land in Menomonie, they represent over \$2.5 million in total value for our cooperative, making projects possible.

Grant opportunities like these, while always available, can be challenging to secure. Our success this year is based on years of relationship building and networking. Being a good corporate citizen on a state and national level helps to establish credibility and trust, making Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery an ideal candidate for these types of grant opportunities.

As with many business strategies, being in the right place at the right time, strategically, is key. There is also a certain amount of knowledge required to assess grant opportunities to ensure they are the right fit for any given project, and complete extensive grant applications and other necessary paperwork.

ellsworth cooperative creamery

dairy proud for over 100 years.

News Bites...

SAVE THE DATE: Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery’s Annual Meeting.

As in 2020, the meeting will be held virtually. Depending on the outlook of the COVID-19 pandemic, a live element maybe added.

Watch for more details, as well as Board of Director self-nomination forms, to come your way soon!

Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery Annual Meeting
Tuesday, March 30, 2021
Agenda TBA

Updated Cheese List

We recently updated our retail store Cheese List to include all the most current products and pricing. You should have received a copy in a recent milk check. To request additional copies, or to place an order, call 715-273-4311, ext. 225.

CONGRATULATIONS & THANK YOU!

Please join us in congratulating our Minnesota patron farmers for their thorough preparations prior to the completion of the Federal Surveys in Minnesota.

Our cooperative scored a 94 overall— Seven farms received perfect scores of 100!

The field staff wish to thank you for all your help! These outstanding results reflect the attention to quality throughout our organization.

Adapting in Times of COVID-19 (Or How NOT to Get Cranky During a Pandemic)

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

We’ve been navigating some stressful days around here. I know we’re not alone. The stress caused by these continuously changing and uncertain times are making news headlines. Even worse, there’s no end in sight.

From our milk haulers to our retail store customers to our staff, we have seen first-hand how the added complexities of doing business during a pandemic are impacting individuals. However, despite it all, the business of making and selling cheese must go on. Here are just a few of the many ways that our operations have been challenged and forced to adapt:

Managing Staff Levels: Not only are we concerned for the health and safety of our team members, we are concerned for their family members, too. An illness in the family is always a staffing challenge; however, what in the past may have been a few days missed from work now equates to 10... 14... or more! Our employees have stepped up and despite the inconvenience of rearranging their personal lives, have been flexible to help cover shifts and take on extra responsibilities. In a way, it’s been humbling and reassuring to know that when the going gets tough, our staff and milk haulers can quickly adopt a “whatever it takes” attitude to get the job done.

Managing Changing Order Patterns: A change in buying patterns by consumers, and disruptions in the supply chain, has drastically changed the way our buyers are purchasing product in both frequency and

quantity. At the same time, the customers still have very specific demands. These changes have required us to handle that demand and their requirements faster than ever before.

We’ve Gone Virtual: You’ve probably attended an online meeting or two since the pandemic first began. Our team has taken virtual meetings to an entirely new level. Not just for meetings any more—we are using technology for virtual inspections and audits, too.

Taking meetings, inspections, and audits virtual has meant investments in technological equipment and upgrades. We’ve had to purchase more video cameras and upgrade internet and broadband technology to meet the demand for increased speed and data.

New Products: Developing and launching new products during this time has been particularly interesting. The lesson learned here is that we can’t count on doing things the way we used to. When it comes to labeling, ordering new film, or purchasing shipping supplies, we have had to adjust our expectations to the realities of the marketplace and our suppliers. This has meant adjusting timelines, collaborating with our partners virtually, and getting creative with our suppliers to find new ways to meet our goals to roll new products out to the marketplace.

Continued...

Adapting in Times of Covid (cont.)

Adapting in our Retail Stores: The changes we’ve been required to make during this time are most visible to the public in our retail stores. Requiring staff to wear masks and asking our customers to do the same, impacts the customer service experience more than you may realize. Limiting the number of customers allowed in the retail stores at one time is against every customer service and marketing lesson we’ve known. Yet, our staff continues to provide great value and the best experience possible, as is evident by the increase in store traffic and sales. Store volume has increased by 15-20% since the start of the pandemic. We’re seeing customers stay longer in the stores and purchase more items at one time, even while we’re limiting headcounts in our stores. Our staff should be commended for maintaining

their smiles (behind their masks) as they’ve been on the frontlines of it all. Despite the challenges, the changes, and the inevitable cranky times, there have been bright spots, too. Virtual meetings have led to a new level of efficiency. We’ve saved on travel expenses, and learned to connect with our customers and suppliers in new ways. Our team has discovered a new adeptness to meeting end-customer demands and overcoming production and supply-chain issues. Through it all we’ve built up some new muscles—adaptation, flexibility, and perseverance. What we never thought possible just a few months ago, we’re making happen today! And when COVID-19 is behind us, we’ll be ready to take what we’ve learned—all the good ideas and creativity—into the future.

Celebrating National Cheese Curd Day!



It’s a holiday that’s so uniquely us—and when you live in the Cheese Curd Capital of Wisconsin, this is how you celebrate! In addition to celebrations in our retail stores and on social media channels, we brought smiles to the faces of hundreds of school kids in the Ellsworth, WI Community School District when we delivered cheese curds to them for National Cheese Curd Day. Some say the “squeaks” could be heard for miles!

The Holiday Season is Underway!

While it might be hard to believe that it's already time to be talking holiday plans, at Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, we’ve been planning for months!

COVID-19 has required us to revisit our usual processes and procedures for the holidays. It might interest you to know...

IT’S GIFT BOX TIME! We anticipate people will feel some extra gratitude and appreciation this year. That leads to extra gift-giving. The 2020 Gift Box Catalog has been updated with a new design, some additional content, and an entirely new gift box selection, featuring many of our best sellers!

View the catalog online at EllsworthCheese.com, or request a copy by calling 715-273-4311 ext. 225. Hopefully, we just made your gift-giving easier!

WELCOME ONLINE SHOPPERS! Trends suggest we will be welcoming more online shoppers to our website this year. We’re ready!

RETAIL READY! Limits on the number of shoppers allowed in our retail stores at one time means we need to get creative around how to keep our customers comfortable in the cold as they wait for their turn to shop. Of course we’ll continue to offer curb-side pick-up services. Plans are also in the works to add holiday décor outside the store and create a warm waiting areas—as space permits—outside our stores.

HAPPY ELVES! We expect shoppers might need some extra assistance this year. Designated helpers will be available to assist them with their gift box orders and shipping needs.