



WEST VIRGINIA GROWN E-NEWSLETTER

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Reflections & Looking Ahead

It is that time again to reflect on the past year and begin making plans for the next, to get together with family and friends, to wish each other a happy holiday season, and to enjoy good foods.

The Marketing & Development Division of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture has been reflecting back on our accomplishments throughout 2006 and looking ahead toward opportunities in the New Year.

This newsletter is an effort to keep you abreast of our current projects as well as provide you with marketing information and opportunities for your business as well.

To keep costs low we plan to establish this as an e-newsletter. If you know someone who would like to receive this via email or you plan to switch to a new email address, please email bbrabham@ag.state.wv.us or call the office at 558-2210 with the new contact information.

We encourage you to share marketing opportunities through this newsletter as well. If you discover any interesting market information at tradeshow, reading trade publications or through your own research and would like to share it, please submit it to bbrabham@ag.state.wv.us or call our office at 304/558-2210 with the details to have it considered for publication.

Producer Interview Update

You should have received a Memorandum from Marketing & Development Division Director Jean Smith informing you about one-on-one visits with West Virginia food companies. We will be sending

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out two forms in the near future along with a postage-paid return envelope in order to advance the interview and file updating process.

You will be given the opportunity to sign a "Confidentiality and Nondisclosure Agreement" between your company and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. The purpose of this written agreement is to reassure you that the Department of Agriculture will **not share** any company recipes, processing information, etc. with anyone other than the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Service District Sanitarians who perform FDA inspections in our state, and your companies designated process authority. The signing of this form is strictly voluntary and **will not** affect any services that your company may need from the West Virginia Department of Agriculture.

Also enclosed will be a 'Service Assistance Request' form that has been developed regarding current and desired service offerings of the Marketing & Development staff. We have found that in order to keep our on-site visits as brief as possible, it is helpful to give producers the opportunity to think through this important part of the interview process in advance. We hope to use the input received from the 'Service Assistance Request' form as a means to focus our services in the future to accommodate West Virginia agribusiness producers' needs and desires.

Thank you for your patience as we undertake the important task of updating and maintaining producer files as another service to the agri-business community in West Virginia. The Marketing & Development Staff look forward to personally meeting with you in the coming months.

2006 Southern Christmas Show

The West Virginia Country Store - stocked with a wide variety of West Virginia Grown specialty foods products from roughly 50 companies - brought in approximately \$55,000 this year, a jump of more than 20 percent over last year.

Our efforts at the Southern Christmas Show in Charlotte received a huge boost from a group of students from West Virginia State Community and Technical College (WVSCTC). The goal of these types of shows is to help producers grow their businesses. At this show, we were also able to provide some of our future business leaders with some practical, hands-on experience. WVSCTC Professor Donna Jarrell coordinated the student effort. Students from management, retail buying and visual merchandising classes helped with designing, building and staffing. Eleven students traveled to Charlotte for at least part of the show and approximately 75 were exposed to the project in some way, including training. These students were a tremendous help!

Tamarack's assistance with the store also added to our success. They sent workers, products and four artisans to demonstrate their crafts.

WVDA staff is thrilled with the success of the show. Product samples provided by producers are a key element to successful sales efforts. We had 12 West Virginia companies that attended and sampled; 4 of which were new agribusinesses that begin within the last year. We commend all these companies for a job well done. WVDA appreciates all the companies that sent products to be sold and promoted at this show-**THANK YOU!** Many West Virginia products are gaining word-of-mouth advertising. Shoppers came looking specifically for our store at the show this year. At least five companies have reported receiving repeat orders from visitors of the Southern Christmas Show.

Approximately 143,000 shoppers passed through the Charlotte Merchandise Mart throughout the 10-day show, which ran Nov. 9-19. West Virginia is well established in the Charlotte market as a

source of specialty foods and as a tourism destination. In fact, the Division of Tourism, co-sponsor of the West Virginia Country Store, ran out of brochures, even though they took 10 percent more than last year. Next year we will target markets in different sections of the United States to benefit our West Virginia agribusinesses. For more information on how your company can become an independent vendor at the Southern Christmas Show for 2007, visit <http://www.southernshows.com/scs/index.php>.

Cultivating Agritourism

Agritourism is defined as the connection of tourism and agriculture. The main goals of the travel industry are to increase visitation and extend overnight stays, which in turn expands revenue. According to Jane Eckert of Eckert AgriMarketing, agritourism takes those travel industry goals one step farther to increase revenue from on-farm activities, protect the farm from fluctuating markets, expand on-farm employment, provide off-season income, improve business sustainability, diversify farm operations and preserve land for future generations. "The current U.S. travel industry trends are a natural tie to agritourism," Eckert said. "People are taking an increased number of shorter trips, within driving distance and planning those trips at the last minute." "People are looking for new experiences -most people today are four generations removed from the farm," Eckert said. "They want to capture family memories of picking their own produce, chasing chickens around the farm or petting baby animals. Agritourism allows producers to tap into that market."

Eckert should know. In 2001, the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) honored her as the farm marketer of the year for her work with her family's apple orchard outside St. Louis, Mo. Eckert developed Eckert's Country Store and Farms in Belleville, Ill., into one of the most successful retail and entertainment farms in America. Today, it is a top attraction that draws more than 400,000 guests annually.

If you are interested in learning more about agritourism in West Virginia, plan to come to the West Virginia Department of Agriculture's Agritourism Workshop on Wednesday, February 7, 2007 from 8:00 a.m.-6 p.m. at the Days Inn Conference Center in Flatwoods, WV where we will have the featured speaker will be Jane Eckert herself. Early registration and a pre-conference workshop will be held on Tuesday, February 6, 2007 in the afternoon. There will be a \$25.00 registration fee. For more information and/or a registration packet contact Cindy Martel at cmartel@ag.state.wv.us or 304/469-9738.

Mountain Bounty Kitchen

The Mountain Bounty Kitchen in Huntington had their grand opening October 11. Considered an incubator facility, Mountain Bounty rents state-of-the-art kitchen space to business owners going into commercial production for the first time and to small producers who may have an established reputation but whose production levels don't warrant the investment in a commercial kitchen of their own.

This facility has absolutely everything that a start-up company could want in a kitchen facility. Everything in there is commercial-grade and meets or exceeds all health and sanitation standards. It can all be rented on an hourly basis at a very reasonable rate.

One of the numerous items that Mountain Bounty, in their three kitchen areas, hosts is an automated fill line which would cost approximately \$350,000 by itself. This is a 14,000-square-

foot, \$2.8 million facility that has been carefully designed to meet the needs of local producers. However, business development is still a large part of the equation. Besides production kitchens, the building also includes conference rooms for tenants to meet with potential customers. The building also contains such amenities as showers and lockers for workers, and in the near future will feature key cards so that tenants can have access to the building when needed. The local Economic Development Authority, Appalachian Regional Commission, Huntington/Ironton Empowerment Zone, State of West Virginia, City of Huntington, Benedum Foundation and Foundation for the Tri-State Community provided the funding needed to get the incubator off the ground.

This facility provides the opportunity for folks trying to go into business for themselves and represents an efficient and realistic means of expanding businesses. For more information on Mountain Bounty Kitchen, phone 304/697-3007, or visit www.mountainbountykitchen.com. For more information on agribusiness development in West Virginia, contact the West Virginia Department of Agriculture at 304/558-2210, or visit www.wvagriculture.org.

2006 West Virginia Recipe Challenge Winners Announced

West Virginia State University (WVSU) Extension along with the State Fair of West Virginia, Mountain Bounty Kitchen, BIZASSIST, Tamarack, and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, proudly announce the winners of the 2006 West Virginia Recipe Challenge. The event took place August 19 at the West Virginia State Fair in Lewisburg, W.Va. Six judges, from professional food service and product marketing professions throughout the state, selected winners in the categories of existing entrepreneur and new entrepreneur.

In the professional or existing entrepreneur category, Frank Goines of Kingwood, W.Va., won first prize for his entry titled "Ms. Mary's Corndog Kit." Goines' entry was selected by the judges based on taste, aroma, presentation and product marketability. Mr. Goines, a truck driver from Preston County, explains that the recipe is a family tradition. "It's mom's original recipe, and we've been preparing our corndogs now for about 37 years at the Preston County Buckwheat Festival. This is her recipe and her face is on the container. Entering the competition was really for her." The existing entrepreneur prize is \$1,000 worth of goods and services to refine product marketing and production.

Winning the new entrepreneur category was Mr. Darrell Vowell of Glenwood, WV. The judges applied the same criteria to the amateur category, ultimately selecting Mr. Vowell's Smoked Pork Ribs as the best in class. The amateur prize is valued at over \$10,000 worth of goods and services to bring the product to market. When asked how he felt about winning, Mr. Vowell explained that the product really sold itself. "With more and more families working two jobs, convenience in the kitchen is what it is all about. The aim was to create a quality entrée that can be cooked to taste and ready to serve in about ten minutes." As witnessed and confirmed by many who enjoyed a sampling of the winning product, Mr. Vowell has filled a need within the market.

Both winning products will go through the prize winning refinement process and are headed for market shelves in West Virginia in the very near future. For details on how to enter the 2007 West Virginia Recipe Challenge please contact Ms. Stacy Turner, Rural Business Services Program Coordinator for WVSU Extension, at 304/466-7113.

Custard Stand Food Products Company Expansion

Custard Stand Food Products owners Dee and Angie Cowger hosted a grand opening celebration October 12, for their new warehouse and facility expansion that will more than double the company's current cooking, storage and freezer space.

Among the dignitaries attending were representatives of Governor Joe Manchin's office, numerous local officials, representatives of the Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF) - which helped to finance the expansion - and long time Commissioner of Agriculture Gus R. Douglass.

Custard Stand Food Products was launched in June of 2003, following repeated requests for a take-home version of the hot dog chili sold at the family's ice cream/snack carry-out restaurant. Just three years later, their frozen hot dog chili is available at more than 200 outlets in eight states. The current production capacity of 2,500 pounds a day will grow to 4,400 pounds a day thanks to the new 30'x50' building that includes a 16'x22' storage freezer. For more information on Custard Stand Food Products, visit www.custardstand.com, or phone 304/847-2942.

New Livestock Breed Association

The Gelbvieh Livestock Breeder Association is organizing a chapter in West Virginia. On September 28, they held an organizational meeting in Jackson County and 17 interested breeders attended; 15 from 6 different counties, and 2 from Ohio. On October 26, they held a membership meeting. For more information about the association contact Tracy Fitzsimmons at tfitzsimmons@ag.state.wv.us or call 304/558-2210.

Benefits of Fancy Foods Show

The 2006 New York Fancy Foods Show - one of the largest of its kind anywhere - ended this spring, but West Virginia agribusinesses are still reaping the rewards. This show puts producers in direct contact with commercial buyers who make large-scale orders. The investment is small compared to the return. It's estimated that participating companies have easily surpassed \$2 million in direct sales from this year's show. There were 21,000 buyers at this year's show and there was a nice mix of chain stores and small gourmet retailers in attendance. Several companies received reorders from previous buyers, which shows that West Virginia products are being well received outside the state. The overall goal is to try to build these types of sustainable retail relationships. 64 one-on-one meetings between West Virginia companies and international buyers were arranged through the Food Export Northeast Buyers' Mission. Custard Stand representatives met with 30 buyers alone.

Participating West Virginia companies were RusLyn Confections of Morgantown, Uncle Bunk's of Sistersville, The Custard Stand of Webster Springs, ThistleDew Farm of Proctor, Blue Smoke Salsa of Ansted, Lui-Lui of Vienna, DeFluri's Fine Chocolates of Martinsburg and Vita Foods of Inwood, which introduced three new Budweiser Gourmet Cooking Sauces (wing, barbecue and basting) it is producing for the brewing giant.

West Virginia's delegation to the show was sponsored by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, the West Virginia Development Office and West Virginia State University.

WV Companies Will Attend 2007 NGA Tradeshow

Four West Virginia companies will be take part in the 2007 National Grocers Association's (N.G.A.) Annual Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, January 29-February 1. The Custard Stand, Ruslyn Confections dba Poochie's Choice, Tasty Blend and Vita Specialty Foods with the assistance of West Virginia Department of Agriculture's Steve Miller will participate in the Convention's Supermarket Synergy Showcase (S3).

The S3 concept show puts our companies face-to-face with hundreds of top level executives in the grocery retail industry who have the authority to make those vital purchasing decisions. Attendees come to see new product ideas and presentations. Some are remodeling or opening new venues. Some go to find new business contacts. Everyone is here to take a hands-on approach to building their own market share. Most importantly, from our producers' perspective, this total experience provides the opportunity to showcase their products as an integral part of a retailer's and wholesaler's growth strategy.

The N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. This vital industry segment, with over 50,000 stores nationwide, accounts for about half of all supermarkets sales. Over the past 25 years, N.G.A. has earned the reputation of delivering a convention program of the highest caliber.

For more information about 2007 National Grocers Association's (N.G.A.) Annual Convention visit www.nationalgrocers.org or contact WVDA Marketing and Development Division at 304/558-2210 to discuss your company's readiness for a tradeshow of this caliber.

Advertising in the Gourmet Industry Trade Publications

Gourmet News, Specialty Food Magazine, Gourmet Retailer are all trade publications for the specialty food industry. The Gourmet industry is evolving at a remarkable pace, creating new channels, opportunities, and challenges at every turn. In this dynamic business environment, an effective way to grow your business may be through advertising in these trade publications. It can be an expensive investment, but a calculated approach to marketing your products to a targeted retailers and distributors of specialty foods can be very beneficial. The 2007 editorial calendars for these publications are now available on-line. Using these calendars allows you to plan your advertising around monthly themes in the publications to promote your product(s) or event(s) more effectively.

According to a gourmet industry survey conducted by WebSurveyor Corp. in Herndon, VA in July 2004, readers chose Gourmet News as their preferred source of industry news compared to Specialty Food Magazine, and Gourmet Retailer. To learn more about advertising in these publications, visit their websites at <http://www.gourmetnews.com/> (*Gourmet News*); <http://www.specialtyfood.com/do/media> (*Specialty Food Magazine*); and <http://www.gourmetretailer.com/gourmetretailer/index.jsp> (*Gourmet Retailer*).

National Association for the Specialty Food Trade Membership

Now is a great time to prepare your application for the National Association for The Specialty Food Trade. Member benefits include the opportunity to exhibit at Fancy Food Shows, inclusion in

special promotions on the national and international level, a subscription to Gourmet Food Magazine and other industry information. An application fee and yearly membership fee (based on gross sales) along with industry references and a detailed business summary and product samples are required. **If you plan on exhibiting in the New York Fancy Foods Show in July, now is the time to apply for inclusion in the show directory.** For a membership packet, contact Cindy Martel at 304/469-3798 or cmartel@ag.state.wv.us.

West Virginia Products to be Displayed in Dubai

Gulfood 2007 will be held in the United Arab Emirates, February 19-22, 2007. Last year's show featured more than 2,000 exhibitors and 32,000 visitors from 146 countries. Best prospects include fresh fruits, beef & poultry, dried fruits & nuts, juices & juice concentrates, cookies, chocolates, jams, oils, snack foods, honey, and sauces/condiments. The Southern United States Trade Association will have a pavilion for the second year at this event and a small space featuring West Virginia products will be prepared including products and signage. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture will pay for shipping expenses. If you are interested in having your product featured, please contact SUSTA Intern, Mary Legg at 304/469-9738 or mlegg@ag.state.wv.us by January 5, 2007.

Upcoming Events

Better Process Control School Acidified Foods Training-January 9 & 10, 2007 at the West Virginia University Tree Fruit Research & Education Center in Kearneysville, WV. The course is sponsored by the Virginia Tech Department of Food Science and Technology in cooperation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. This course fulfills the requirements set forth in Title 21, Part 108.25 (3)(f) of the Federal Food Code. The Code states: "All plant personnel involved in acidification, pH control, heat treatment or other critical factors of the operation shall be under the operating supervision of a person who has attended a school approved by the Commissioner for giving instruction in food handling techniques, food protection principles, personal hygiene, plant sanitation practices, pH controls and critical factors in the acidification..." All qualified food processors are encouraged to take advantage of this training opportunity. Space is limited to 50 participants. Pre-registration and payment are required by **January 2, 2007**. Questions or additional information requests should be directed to Kellie S. Boles, the Agriculture Development Officer for Jefferson County at 304/728-3051 ext. 239 or kboles@jctc.org. For assistance from the WVDA, please contact Teresa Halloran at 304/558-2210 or thalloran@ag.state.wv.us.

Future Harvest-CASA's Farming for Profit and Stewardship 2007 Conference-January 12-13, 2007 in Hagerstown, Maryland. Don't miss the chance to learn from area farmers and agricultural educators with expertise on and insight into new, profitable farm enterprises! Future Harvest-CASA brings together outstanding farmers, regionally known researchers and experienced educators in the field of sustainable agriculture in its popular annual gathering. Visit the conference website at <http://www.futureharvestcasa.org/> for a registration information and conference agenda. Tom McConnell of West Virginia University Extension Service is organizing a group to attend this conference. Financial assistance is available to attend this conference. For more information about the financial assistance, contact Tom at TRMcConnell@mail.wvu.edu or 304/293-6131 ext. 4237.

West Virginia Cattlemen Association's (WVCA) Annual Convention & Beef Genetic Symposium-January 19-20 at the Ramada Inn in Morgantown, WV. Registration deadline is January 5, 2007. For

more information visit the WVCA website at <http://www.wvbeef.org/> or contact Jim Bostic at 304/472-4020. Space is limited for this conference. Registrations are first come/first serve basis.

Taking Care of Business: Financial Management for Entrepreneurs-January 23-25, 2007 and March 20-21, 2007. What do your financial statements tell you about your business? When should you seek financing? Where is your company's cash? Find answers to these and other questions at Taking Care of Business, a unique training program designed exclusively for entrepreneurs interested in growth and success. TCB gives business owners practical tools to shape ideas and opportunities into successful ventures. The program is conducted by financial experts of the National Development Council, a private, non-profit organization specializing in obtaining financing for small and medium sized businesses. The course will be offered on January 23-25, 2007 at the Commons Area at the New River Community & Technical College in Summersville, WV from 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM each day and again on March 20-21, 2007. Registration deadline is **December 31, 2006**. Class size is limited and registration is on first come first served basis. Contact **Jim Epling** at **304/872-0020** for more information. Training Sponsors are BB&T, West Virginia Development Office, WV Small Business Development Centers, Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council, 4-C Economic Development Authority, and Natural Capital Investment Fund.

31st Annual Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Supply Show of the Northeast-will be held January 30, 31 & February 1, 2007 at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center. For more information, call 1-800-261-5991 or visit www.hmrsss.com.

16th Annual Farming for the Future Conference sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture will be held February 1, 2, and 3rd at the Penn State Conference Center in State College. Visit the conference website at <http://www.pasafarming.org/conferences/confinfo.htm> for registration information and complete conference agenda. Tom McConnell of West Virginia University Extension Service is organizing a group to attend this conference. Financial assistance is available to attend this conference. For more information about the financial assistance, contact Tom at TRMcConnell@mail.wvu.edu or 304/293-6131 ext. 4237.

West Virginia Agritourism Conference-Mark your calendar! The first West Virginia Agritourism Conference will be held on Wednesday, February 7, 2007 at the Days Inn Conference Center in Flatwoods. Nationally recognized agritourism expert, Jane Eckert will be our featured presenter. More conference information contact Cindy Martel at 304/469-3798 or cmartel@ag.state.wv.us.

2007 North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference -"Growing West" is the theme for the 2007 North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association annual conference slated to take place February 12-17, 2007 in Calgary, Alberta. Featuring a pre-conference bus tour, pre-conference workshops, a trade show, educational sessions, and post-conference sessions early bird registration ends January 6, 2007. The convention location for the trade show and educational sessions is the Hyatt Regency Calgary in the province of Alberta. For more information, visit www.nafdma.com/Alberta.

2007 Northeast Buyers Mission- More than 20 buyers from 22 countries will conduct one-on-one meetings with sellers of US products at the 2007 Northeast Buyers Mission. Organized by Food Export USA-Northeast and Food Export Association of the Midwest USA (organizations similar to the Southern United States Trade Association-SUSTA in different geographic regions), meeting will be held on January 8, 2007 in Philadelphia, January 10 in New York City, and January 12 in Boston. All meetings are pre-scheduled and there is a \$225.00 charge for West Virginia companies. Complete

buyer profiles are available; please contact Cindy Martel at cmartel@ag.state.wv.us or call (304) 469-9738 for additional information. The deadline is **December 29, 2006**.

WVDA Associated Legislature Days

January 11	WV Association of Fairs & Festivals Reception
January 22	Agriculture & Conservation Day
January 31	WV Farm Bureau
February 6	WVU/WVU Extension Service Day
February 23	WV Association of Fairs & Festival Day
February 28	WV Tourism Day

Additional Marketing and Development Activities

January 12-13	WVAFF Fairs & Festival 75 th Convention, Charleston Civic Center
January 19-20	WVCA Annual Convention & Beef Genetic Symposium, Ramada Inn, Morgantown
January 26-28	Cast-Iron Cookoff, Stonewall Jackson Resort
January 31-Feb. 3	National Cattle Industry Annual Convention & Trade Show, Nashville, TN
February 1-3	PASA's Sustainable Ag Conference, Penn State, PA
February 3	Honey Bee Expo, WVU-P, Parkersburg
Feb 12	Doddridge Co. Beekeepers Class, 6:30 p.m., West Union
Feb 26-28	Direct Marketing Conference, Ramada Inn, Morgantown
July 5-8	Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, Ripley
August 10-18	State Fair of West Virginia
October 4-7	WV Pumpkin Festival

For more information about these activities contact the Marketing & Development Division of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture at 304/558-2210.