

# OUR TOWNS

## Hartington

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# Everybody Say Cheese

## Hartington-Area Dairy Expands Its Product Line

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HARTINGTON, Neb. — Chicken soup, buffalo wing, garlic dill and salsa aren't flavors people normally associate with cheese.

However, these are among the varieties now distributed by Burbach's Countryside Dairy, located near Hartington, Neb. There are currently 13 different flavors available in 7.5 ounce flats, five in curds and four in string cheese.

"We thought these flavors would catch the customers' attention more," said Dean Burbach, who heads the dairy with his wife, Lisa. "Cheese you can get, but good cheese in unique flavors is harder to find."

The Burbachs have been distributing milk in their trademark glass bottles for the past four years, and cheese was added last month.

Dean Burbach said some grocery store managers had asked them when they would expand their product line.

"Just to provide another product before we could get anything like that off the ground, we started to research some smaller cheese makers that have the same philosophy as we do, and just tried to find the best cheeses we could," he said.

Burbach said the company had been researching varieties of cheese for a number of years, but not in a serious way.

"After quite a bit of research, we found some cheeses that we really liked from a company that could supply what we thought we would need," he said. "We provide our products to 70 stores, so we've got

to have quite a bit of cheese. ...

"Any place that we have the milk, we've offered them the cheese," he said.

The cheese itself comes from several dairies located in Wisconsin and is sold under the Burbach's label.

"(Wisconsin cheese) really is the best there is," Burbach said.

The most important part of the product is the milk from which the cheese is made.

"Some of the cheeses that we get are from smaller farms — dairy farms that process their own milk and make cheese from that," Burbach said. "And some other cheeses are just from cheese manufacturers that buy milk from specific dairy farms."

"We leaned more toward that kind of cheese process so we could better identify the source of the milk and the source of the cheese," he said.

All the varieties of cheese went through a taste-testing process before they were approved.

"These are the varieties that we like, and what we also thought customers would like," Burbach said. "I'm not necessarily a cheese connoisseur, but the appearance of the cheese is better than what you'll find in stores, and the texture and the aftertaste."

The first shipment of cheese hit store shelves in April, and Burbach said response has been good.

"Since it's only been out a little under two months, we judge the sales on the reorders," he said. "The first order just sells the shelf, but the reorders are the tell-tale thing. And we've already had several stores



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D  
Dean Burbach — who heads Burbach's Countryside Dairy near Hartington, Neb., with his wife Lisa — displays some of the cheeses that his company now distributes.

that have ordered several times in just a six-week period."

Burbach's Countryside Dairy may be best known for the glass bottles in which it distributes its milk, thereby eliminating the need for plastic. Burbach said this "green" aspect wasn't the initial impetus for using glass.

"Using glass was just to provide a better product in a better package, but it turns out that environmentally, it's the right thing to do, as well," he said. "I figured out the other day that the amount of milk that we've sold since we started, if it would be put into plastic jugs, would be enough plastic to cover a football field more than five feet deep. That's a lot of plastic, and plastic never goes away."

Of course, plastic is required for packaging the cheese, and Burbach said one possible solution for this is to provide deli counters with the cheese, so it can be sold by the weight or number of slices the customer specifies without requiring the vacuum-packaged wrapping.

Burbach said cheese could be the beginning of something new for the company.

"We do hope that the cheese is a product in a line of more to come," he said. "We have toyed with different products. In fact, one of the guys that works for me made sour cream in his kitchen, and that worked out very well. So someday we'll do sour cream, someday butter."

## GRANTS

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about 60 people. This training will be integrated into the existing associate degree in advanced manufacturing that is currently offered in Yankton as part of BHSU's Associate of Science Program.

"The program will focus on smart building technology and design and Lean manufacturing concepts," said Lisa Wittenhagen, admissions counselor of the Yankton IT program. "We hope to use this grant as a way to get the program started, so that moving forward we can put out qualified workers helping the manufacturing community become as efficient as possible."

The second grant awarded to RTEC in cooperation with DataVator is for \$50,000 and will be used to establish a program to train employees in infrastructure efficiency and power utilization effectiveness, specific to data storage and transfer facilities.

"The purpose of the grant is to teach workers the skills required in emerging energy efficiency and renewable energy industries, specifically how to handle high amounts of energy coming into data storage facilities," Scott Sandal, owner of DataVator in Yankton, said. "The

amount of energy required to run a data storage facility is extremely large and knowing how to safely work with the levels is imperative to being able to successfully operate a data storage facility."

Sandal said that to find a similar program he would have to travel to St. Louis or further.

"I know there is a need for the program, just based on the fact the Omaha area is a huge location for data storage facilities," he said. "Think about it, if a person did not know how to handle a large electrical current and subsequently caused a crash of a system, it would not just affect us here, it would affect potentially thousands of people. It is very important that any worker working with powering a center be trained in the proper handling and wiring of these large amounts of energy."

Svatos said that the types of programs these two grants represent are just the beginning of what he expects to see at RTEC in the future.

"We are in the unique situation that we can adapt and become whatever the community needs us to be," he said. "If there is a need in the industrial and manufacturing community or even just in the community in general, we are going to find a way to provide the education to train the workers to fill that need. That is what we are all about here at RTEC. These two grants just show that we are on the right track."

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