

Farm Family Creates Market For Beef Brats

If you don't like brats made from pork, Joe Brewer suggests you try beef brats made on his family's cattle farm. Brewer Family Farms, LLC., introduced Brewer Beef Brats a couple of years ago, and the word is spreading across Iowa and other parts of the country as Brewer and his partners grill them at events and sell them online and through stores.

Brewer is the fifth generation on the Dallas Center, Iowa, crop and livestock farm (Limousin-cross beef and hogs).

He and his sister, Emily, had the idea to make brats using beef when they were in college. A couple of years ago, they discovered a business that makes skinless pork brats, and the Iowa processor agreed to work with the Brewers and develop recipes for skinless beef brats.

"We did a lot of taste testing," Brewer notes, which resulted in four flavors:

jalapeno hot cheese, cheddar bacon, cheddar cheese and Hawaiian Canadian bacon and fresh pineapple.

The brats are made by a state-inspected locker, so the farm family doesn't need to deal with much of the paperwork and certification required for processing.

"The brats are put on the grill frozen and take about 15 min. to cook," Brewer says. Consumers like the convenience, and the fact that they are skinless.

He and his business partners - wife, Brenda; sister, Emily; and her husband, Jeff - grill the brats for sampling at stores and farmers markets, as well as at events. Brewer built the grills, which can cook up to 60 brats at a time.

Being near a fast-growing suburb has been important for local sales. Sales soar during grilling season, but people order the brats (six 1/3-lb. brats/package) from the Brewers



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throughout the year.

He directs people to the farm's Facebook page (Brewer Family Farms, LLC) for more information.

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Horse Trailer Converted To Concession Stand

With a lot of elbow grease and help from friends, Nancy Vannoy turned an old horse trailer into a cheery concession stand for a popular Illinois event. The shingled roof on the trailer makes it look like a little red barn - complete with a motion-activated rooster in a "hayloft" window.

Between serving "Cow Paddy" ice cream bars and demonstrating skills such as butter making, rendering lard, and preserving eggs, the trailer/barn has become a popular attraction at the annual Abraham Lincoln National Railsplitting Festival held the third weekend in September.

As a volunteer for the 1800's-style event, Vannoy recognized potential in her son's two-horse trailer that was no longer needed.

"It works well because we can store everything in this, pull it to where we want

it and unfold it. It is a licensed trailer, and it makes it real handy that everything is in there," she explains.

She removed the rotting floor and other wood, then hammered out the metal dents and patched with new metal where necessary. The floor was replaced with planks and leftover paint mixed to come up with red to give the trailer a new look. Pegboards on the inside are handy to hang signs and other items. Storage shelves on top of the trailer - in the hayloft - hold poles and awnings, which were made from old paint cloths and two 40 by 40-ft. tents recycled after a storm tore them up.

Awnings are set up on all four sides, Vannoy says. Three sides offer demos, and the back has tables for people eating ice cream.

"I really love the Ping-Pong table we re-



Nancy Vannoy turned a horse trailer into a cheery concession stand. Trailer's shingled roof makes it look like a little red barn.



cycled," she adds. Both sides of the trailer have half of the table, with one side resting on the wide fender. Covered with tablecloths to cover the wheel wells, it fits well with the little red barn décor. Likewise, a smaller table covered with a cloth covers the hitch in the front.

With the trailer's generous storage space, everything can be torn down and stowed away until needed the following year.

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Mobile Locker Plant Brings Processing To Farms

After years of planning, John Knott is looking forward to taking his Mobile Processing Unit around southern Maryland this summer for on-the-farm USDA-inspected slaughtering and processing.

There is plenty of demand for his custom-built Grumman Olson trailer tractor and his slaughtering, butchering and wrapping services, which allow producers to make direct sales of individual cuts of meat. That's because when Knott arrives at a location, he will have a USDA inspector with him.

Knott's service saves customers the cost of transporting livestock and offers them convenience.

Knott's truck has hot water to wash the cow down, a track to hang up to three cows or 40 pigs at a time, and a refrigeration system to cool the meat as he hauls it back to his Mechanicsville, Md., processing facility that was once a tobacco barn. After aging it, the meat is cut up, vacuum-sealed and frozen - ready for customers to pick up.

Knott raises cattle also, and figured the mobile service would be in demand in the area for producers like him. When he learned commercial trucks cost about \$250,000, he figured he could save money by custom building his own rig. Though

his truck will cost less than that, buying one might have been a better deal in the long run, he says. Besides being bigger to haul more hanging meat at a time, it would have saved time and the hassle he's gone through dealing with all the paperwork and regulations. For example, he needs a restroom for the inspector. Since his truck is too small for that, he needs to haul a camper with a restroom. Plus regulations require many specific features in the processing trailer - 165 F° water, a holding tank underneath, and food grade hoses, for example.

But now that his truck is completed, he is eager to get his mobile unit rolling through about five Maryland counties.

Knott knows of about a dozen producers that sell meat who may be interested in his USDA services. Others, including many Amish producers who raise meat for their own use, are also interested in his services and won't require the USDA inspector's services.

In addition to cattle and hogs, he will process sheep and goats.

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