

Weller's thermopane windows have panes of glass spaced 2 in. apart to make an efficient window.



He Sells Plans To Make Thermopane Windows

Living on the border of Vermont and Canada, thermopane windows can make a big difference, says George Weller. As a DIYer, he developed a method to make well-insulated, inexpensive windows.

His technique involves pieces of glass, wood, and a 2-in. gap. For \$25, he offers the secret tip to make the windows frost and fog-free and effective in keeping the cold out.

The former chemist embraces innovative technology and businesses on his family's Weller Farm in Quebec. The family sells garden produce, offers farm stays and airplane rides, and raises golden retrievers and Beefalo. The Wellers preserved and added buildings to the 350-acre property to create a working farm and were featured in FARM SHOW in 2020 (Vol. 44, No. 3) for the open-pollinated sweet corn they raise and sell.

Whether it's building a greenhouse or upgrading windows, Weller focuses on efficiency and evidence that it works.

The farm's website includes a chart of

indoor temperature readings taken next to walls, a purchased thermopane window, and his homemade windows.

"I use a remote contact thermometer with a red infrared laser light," he explains.

With an outside temperature of -21 F, the commercial window temperature inside was 38 F at the top, while his homemade window was 41 F.

The homemade triple-glass thermopane window he made was 50 F. That window has a 1/4-in. piece of glass on the outside with two thinner pieces of glass spaced 2-in. apart on the inside.

"It's an inexpensive way to get an efficient window," he says. "Once you know the trick, you can make all you want."

The temperature chart and information on how to obtain the plans are under "George's Ideas" on the website.

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HOW IT WORKS

WE SOURCE THE FOOD

BUILD YOUR BOX

Meat Hub Handles Marketing, Delivery

Nick Wallace takes the hassle out of selling meat directly to consumers for 26 Iowa livestock producers. His 99 Counties sells grass-fed beef, pasture-raised pork, lamb, and poultry, as well as pet food, to more than 1,300 consumers. His 99 Counties handles logistics from processing to packaging, storage, marketing, and shipping.

"We handle all the stuff in the middle that keeps small farmers from thriving with direct sales," says Wallace. "That's where people burn out. You can't do all that and have a family life."

Wallace knows what he's talking about. For more than 17 years, he sold meat directly to consumers. The 99 Counties

model was designed to solve the problems he faced.

"We invested in coolers, trucks, processors, and fuel, and we hit the road," he recalls.

In 17 years, his family packed and delivered over 100,000 boxes and, as he says, collected countless hugs, handshakes, and conversations. The experience provided the basis in customers and expertise for 99 Counties.

"About 90 percent of our customers are what we built as Wallace Farms," says Wallace. "99 Counties has let us expand what we can offer as we add more farmers."

One of the chores he handles is scheduling processing. Wallace has five main processors to work with, including a poultry processor



Chaney's Dairy Barn claims to be the only dairy in Kentucky that makes ice cream from its own milk.

Dairy Makes Treats From Cow To Cone

Fourth-generation Kentucky dairy farmer Carl Chaney and his wife Debra faced a tough decision in 2003. They needed to decide whether to sell their purebred Jersey dairy herd or take it to a new level by marketing their milk differently and directly to the consumer.

"Debra and I went on a fact-finding tour, and the plan we settled on was to capitalize on using our high-butterfat Jersey milk to make great ice cream," says Carl. The plan gradually took shape, and today, Chaney's Dairy Barn claims to be the only dairy in Kentucky that makes ice cream from its own milk. An added bonus is that Chaney's Dairy Barn has become a destination for tour and school groups. The brand has become well-known throughout Kentucky and beyond.

Along the way, the Chaney's built a new dairy barn with a state-of-the-art Lely Astronaut robotic milking system and a milk-processing facility that operates under the name J. R. Chaney Bottling Co. The operation sells 3,000 to 4,000 gal. of branded milk weekly to Kroger stores and other retailers. Carl's daughter, Elizabeth, manages the bottling company.

It's the award-winning ice cream, however, that's Carl's pride and joy. "We like to say that we control the ice cream all the way from the cow to the cone," he says. The company website offers tempting photos of more than 50 colorful ice cream varieties with names like Cookie MOOnster, Cow Tracks, Nutter Udder, and Cowentine's.

and one that does snack sticks.

Another big challenge for individual farmers is marketing, adds Wallace. 99 Counties developed their own website and use Shopify as their commerce platform. Delivery is via FedEx and UPS.

"Marketing is a full-time job," he says. "We have a marketing manager who works on it, doing social media such as Instagram and Facebook. Facebook has provided our biggest return."

With less than a year under his belt with 99 Counties, Wallace is satisfied with the organization's growth. While the bulk of sales is split between Iowa customers and Chicago area customers, 99 Counties has shipped meat to California, Oregon, Washington, Florida, and Texas.

"We did home delivery for about 10 months but couldn't get it to scale compared to partnering with UPS and FedEx," says Wallace. "It wasn't bad in Iowa, but with Chicago customers, it meant vans, employees, a warehouse with freezers, all extra costs that were higher than working with UPS and FedEx."

Using commercial shippers also works well with irregular shoppers. While he has a couple hundred customers signed up

Most of Chaney's ice cream is sold on-site at the Dairy Barn, which is also a restaurant and gift shop. During the summer, they offer "Chaney's Ice Cream and a Movie," a free event for children and their families. "We recently had more than 400 adults and kids who came to eat ice cream and watch 'Finding Nemo,'" Carl says.

Other amenities at the farm include a playground with jumping pillows and meeting space for groups, along with self-guided tours of the dairy barn and its robotic milking system. Self-guided tours cost \$4/person and have audio and video stations that explain how the dairy farm operates. Educational tours are available for area school groups. Chaney's also operates several ice cream concession trailers at regional gatherings and events and for fund-raising activities.

In June 2023, Chaney's Dairy Barn was featured on Guy Fieri's All-American Road Trip on the Food Network.

Carl says Chaney's Dairy Barn has grown 8 to 10 percent annually, thanks to the family's dedication and working many different revenue streams. "We knew all along that the answer for us was agri-tourism, so it's gratifying to see how the business continues to flourish," Carl says.

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for monthly delivery, others order more sporadically. The challenge, he notes, is helping consumers understand the difference in their meat sources.

"People have choices," says Wallace. "It's really hard to get their attention and help them understand what we're trying to do and why they should care. The marketing money we've spent has been pretty effective, and we're seeing many new customers order a second and third time."

The name 99 Counties relates to the number of counties in Iowa. Wallace would love to have producers in each county. His ultimate goal would be to have similar meat hubs in other states.

"We want to build this company where we pay a premium at the farm gate, so the farmer can make enough money to create nutrient-dense food with animals that are raised right," says Wallace. "We want to be the disruptor in the middle that brings that food to the consumer."

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