

Motorized French Fry Cutter

Since Bill Storms made his first motorized french fry cutter a decade ago, thousands of pounds of potatoes have been cut and sold at local antique tractor shows. The "Potato Master" is so impressive that Storms, 75 years old, was encouraged to start building and selling them.

The Greencastle, Penn., entrepreneur says there is great profit to be made selling french fries made from fresh potatoes. But making fries with a manual cutter is a lot of work.

"Having built a log splitter, I thought I could use the same concept to push potatoes through a cutting head. He gathered a motor, gearbox and materials he had in his shop and purchased a cutting head at a restaurant supply store.

It's simple to operate: drop in one potato at a time, and move the potato pusher head by stepping on a foot pedal. The Potato Master is powered by a 1/4 hp motor and gearbox that will cut 300 to 800 lbs. of potatoes an hour.

"The quality and size of the potato

dictates how much it cuts in an hour," Storms says. "It will keep up with 8 to 10 fryers with two baskets each."

To clean the machine, remove a couple of wing nuts and pins to free the cutter, and rinse it out in the sink.

Customers enjoy watching the fries being made almost as much as they enjoy eating them, Storm says. After numerous requests, Storms started making them for sale at \$1,950. When another organization said they needed a model to cut at least 900 lbs. per hour, Storms designed a double-headed model for \$2,400. Both come with a 3-year warranty on the motor and a 1-year warranty on the cutter, as well as a video explaining how to operate and maintain it.

To learn more check out the video on Storm's website, which shows the Potato Master in operation.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Storms, 213 S. Allison St., Greencastle, Penn. 17225 (ph 717 597-8364; www.potatomaster.com).

French fry cutter is powered by a 1/4 hp motor and gearbox. It can cut 300 to 800 lbs. of potatoes per hour.



To make French fries, operator drops in one potato at a time and uses a foot pedal to activate the potato pusher.

Pick-N-Pay Honor System Works

When customers stop by to pick veggies in Tom Lopez's pick-n-pay gardens, they are trusted to pay for whatever they pick. Flags in the garden indicate which veggies are ready to pick, and a slate board is revised every day. It indicates what is ready, where it is in the gardens, and what to pay. People pick and leave their money behind.

"The honor system is a giant plus for us," he says. "People love that someone trusts them at a time when everyone seems to be at each other's throats. Most of our customers are working middle class, and they want to be fair. Sometimes they will throw in a little extra, just to keep this resource here."

Lopez and his wife have used the system for the past five years. Each year they have doubled production and sales with no advertising. The system has allowed them to learn as they grow without a lot of cost.

"We started out incredibly small and grew each year," he says. "There is much

to learn, such as what to grow and when to start it. Each year we get sharper."

Today they plant about two acres of vegetables on their rural Colorado farm. Lopez stresses the low-cost gardening enterprise isn't a big money maker for him and his wife. But it has other benefits.

It helps draw traffic to the farm's pick-your-own orchard and horse boarding operation. They also have free range laying hens and rent out a facility for weddings and other special events.

"People stop by to pick some vegetables and stay to buy some eggs and pick some fruit," says Lopez. "They see the stables and may ask about boarding a horse with us or see the reception hall and may hold a wedding here."

Lopez owns 120 acres in total. Much of it was once hay fields. While he still has about 50 acres of hay, every year more and more of the farm is in trees. In addition to the one



Customers at this "honor system" garden pick their own veggies and leave money behind. "People love that someone trusts them," says owner Tom Lopez.

acre orchard of apples, pears, cherries and plums, his wife Kristin plants between 300 and 500 new trees a year.

"The place doesn't even resemble what it once did," he says. "This spring we are adding 300 asparagus plants. Perhaps eventually we will expand to a volume level where we can justify hired help to work the garden

stand, but for now this works fine."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lone Hawk Farms, 10790 N. 49th St., Longmont, Colo. 80503 (ph 303 776-8458 or 303-956-3866; admin@lonehawkfarms.com; www.lonehawkfarms.com).

Roll Your Own Steel Roofing

When Glenn Eggmeyer went shopping for barn roofing 30 years ago, he unexpectedly discovered a new business to get into. Today he not only rolls and sells steel roofing, but he also makes and sells rolling machines.

"I was building a barn at the time and was amazed how expensive the roofing was," says Eggmeyer. "I found a guy who bought discounted steel and rolled it with a crude roller. It was powered with a Volkswagen motor using wheel rims to make the ribs. He had it set up in a parking lot and was selling roofing like crazy."

Eggmeyer, who farmed at the time, bought the fellow out and got into the business. Over the next 30 years, he cut back on farming and increased his rolled steel business. He also replaced that first machine with new machines he designed himself.

"I found out that steel roofing was more lucrative than crops," says Eggmeyer. "The mark-up depends on the type of raw material you get. Some are real low-priced due to defects, while some may be close to prime steel prices."

The type of defect can differ substan-

tially, he adds. Perhaps a paint roller had a speck on it that in turn left unpainted specs the length of a roll of steel. Rejected for its intended use, it may be severely discounted in price, yet still fine for use as roofing.

"The worst defects are called bell coils," explains Eggmeyer. "When the steel gets rolled up initially, an edge may rub and curl a little on one side, and by the time 6 more inches have been rolled, there is a big lip on one side."

Eggmeyer purchases bell coil rolls at significant discounts. It's labor intensive, but can produce a large profit margin, he adds. In addition to his rolling machines, he also builds and sells machines to slit the bell coil edge off as it's unrolled.

Another common defect occurs when a coil of material gets out of round. While large commercial equipment may need a coil that fits a standard diameter mandrel, Eggmeyer built a horizontal uncoiler. It pulls steel off that is otherwise prime quality, but won't fit a mandrel.

Eggmeyer sells his steel roller machines for \$20,000 to \$35,000 depending on the coil width and number of ribs to be made,



Glenn Eggmeyer rolls and sells steel roofing, and also makes and sells rolling machines.

plus options such as hydraulic cut off shears.

Eggmeyer admits that a high volume, commercial, steel rolling machine can roll enough steel to roof a large barn in 10 min., while one of his might take an hour. However, volume comes at a price.

"A commercial roller machine sells for \$100,000 to \$250,000," explains Eggmeyer. "For a small operation, my machines are fast enough. You can roll and cut the roofing for a barn and make decent money even buying prime steel, without getting into secondary."

Eggmeyer builds machines that will corrugate flat metal from 27-in., 41-in. or 48-in.

wide coils of 29 ga. (standard for barn roofs) or 26 ga. (commercial strength roofing). He can build machines to roll even 24 ga., but machine and material get costly.

"A lot of people think about getting into the business, but they don't know where to buy the material," says Eggmeyer. "I can provide both the machines and help them get the material to roll."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Steel Depot, P.O. Box 176, Jasper, Mo. 64755 (ph 417 394-2507; steeldepot@live.com).