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Slow Press Makes High-Quality Oils

The made-in-Wisconsin M70 oil press makes soybean oil that can be burned in a diesel engine as well as sunflower oil that can be poured on a salad. You can run practically any kind of seed or nut through to get a food-grade oil and a high-protein meal. The secret is in the way it works.

"Our expelled oil comes out between 90 and 120 degrees, well below the 138-degree limit for cold pressed oils," says Ryan

Thomas, OilPress.Co. "Anyone who farms can process their own commodities and extract the oil to use for medicinal, cooking or soap making purposes, anywhere vegetable oil is used."

Thomas explains that soybean oil produced at higher temperatures by most conventional presses starts to polymerize. Before it can be used as fuel or for most other purposes, it has to go through a toxic chemical process

to break up the polymers.

"Cold press soybean oil is very low viscosity," he says. "It can be used directly in a diesel engine."

Finding a farm-scale oil press is what got Thomas into the business. Prior to 2001, he was selling a multi-oil combustion system he had patented to farmers who were burning oil they pressed from their soybeans.

"They were using European, farm-scale presses built to handle canola and sunflower seeds," says Thomas. "They were destroying them on soybeans."

A mechanical engineer since 1990, Thomas set out to make a better press. "I could see why the European presses failed, so I set out to build one that could handle soybeans," he says. "In the 20 years since, I've sold more than 3,000 worldwide."

He has continued to improve the design. The M70 has been in its 5th generation for 3 years. With it, he doubled the size of the bearings in the chain drive. That allowed him to offer a full 5-year warranty on the \$9,840 oil press.

"Our oil press will produce 50 to 70 gal. of oil a day," says Thomas. "That's 1,500 to 2,100 gals. per month with most oilseed crops."

The M70 is rated at 700 lbs. in 24 hours. It's engineered to run 24 hrs. a day for months on end without intervention. It draws only 4 to 6 amps under normal operation. In a 24-hr. period while crushing soybeans, it used 21.3 kWh, roughly \$2 a day in most communities, estimates Thomas.

"The fact that it's a value-added process appeals to me," he says. "I have one customer who leases his canola and sunflower seed oil to the local school district to use in

their kitchen. At the end of the week, he takes back the used oil and extracts it for diesel fuel."

Clay Oliver, Pitts, Ga., operates several of Thomas' oil presses. He uses them on everything from sunflower, sesame and pumpkin seeds to coriander seeds, peanuts and pecans. In addition to oil sales, he dries and grinds the meals to make specialty flour. His specialties include pecan oil at \$17 for 8 oz. and pecan flour at \$10 a pound. He even processes okra into oil and meal.

In recent years, Thomas has seen a rising demand for his presses for use with hemp seed. He sees tremendous potential for the hemp oil, noting that his Canadian customers report producing from 150 to 300 gals. of oil per acre. It'll burn directly in diesel engines.

"I have one customer who makes a health supplement with hemp oil," says Thomas. "She sells it for \$30 per fluid ounce. That's \$3,840 per gallon."

While OilPress.Co does have some dealers, 99 percent of his sales are direct. "The machine is so simple; it doesn't require a dealer to set it up and teach a person to operate it. If you can make a smoothie with a blender, you can operate our press."

Thomas also sells a centrifuge oil cleaner to remove contaminants down to one micron as well as water. Made completely of stainless steel, it's easy to use, easy to clean, and produces a food-grade quality oil.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, OilPress.Co, 20430 70th Ave., Chippewa Falls, Wis. 54729 (ph 715-926-1193; toll-free 877-645-7737; oilpressco@protonmail.com; www.oilpress.co).

Farm School Teaches Organic Business

The Organic Farm School on Whidbey Island in Washington doesn't offer accreditation. Instead, it focuses on teaching important lessons for a successful business in agriculture by offering practical experience in a broad range of skills needed for farming. Instead of paying tuition, students receive a stipend along with room and board during their February through Thanksgiving school year.

While the payment and the beautiful location are nice bonuses, Judy Feldman, the nonprofit school's executive director, emphasizes students earn those benefits as they study and work at the 10-acre farm. To keep the working conditions realistic, class sizes are limited to about half a dozen.

While Feldman focuses on outreach to consumers and running the school, instructors and facilitators cover lessons and issues in agriculture. That includes vegetable crop and flower production, raising livestock (lamb and poultry) and processing poultry, seed production, bookkeeping, marketing, and much more.

As a certified organic farm, there's plenty of labor required, such as hand weeding, tractor cultivation, and learning how to grow in high tunnels and set up irrigation, says farm manager Jeff Markette.

"We have some nice things like the high tunnel," he says, but much of the operation is similar to what first-year farmers could afford.

"If something breaks, it's a teaching opportunity," Markette says. Irrigation needs to be moved around, and electrical lines and pipes need to be buried. Mechanics class focuses on changing oil and equipment maintenance.

Because the farm is certified organic, students learn the necessity of record keeping, which will benefit them in any type of farming they do, Markette says. Plus, organic certified products earn premium prices that are important for



Farm School teaches vegetable crops, flower production, raising livestock and processing poultry as well as seed production.

successful operations. Learning how to save organic open-pollinated dry seed (lettuce, radish, flowers, shelling peas, etc.) also provides an extra income source and optional crop for farmers as they get older.

"There's a need for more small-scale farmers as quickly as possible," Feldman says. Between local farms and connections the school has throughout the U.S. with former students, Organic Farm School graduates have many work opportunities.

"When they leave here, we don't encourage them to get their own farm (right away)," she adds. Instead, they recommend new farmers get experience as they work for someone else, do an internship, or start with a small-scale farm while working a part-time job. Growing vegetables is generally the best way to start for success and then work into a specialty.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Organic Farm School, 6390 Maxwellton Rd., Clinton, Wash. 98236 (ph 360-579-4989; judy@organicfarmschool.com; www.organicfarmschool.org).

Herbal Farm Sells Unique Plants, Offers Farm Visits

Well-Sweep Herb Farms is a 120-acre herb and flower farm in Warren County, N.J., known for its abundance of unusual plants and openness to visitors.

Husband and wife duo Cyrus and Louise Hyde purchased the property in the mid-1960's with plans to use it as a homestead. Decades of work and a joint passion for gardening helped the pair transform their derelict property into one of America's most noteworthy herb farms.

Today, Well-Sweep is home to one of the nation's largest collections of herbs and perennials. The farm produces nearly 1,900 plant varieties, ranging from the familiar to the far-flung and exotic. Louise remains at the forefront of event planning for the farm, while Cyrus, who passed in 2022, was an avid plant collector and breeder. Day-to-day operations are completed by a crew of seasonal workers that includes family members.

The farm is known for its themed garden spaces, including butterfly, herbal, medicinal, perennial, and rock gardens. The formal knot garden is lined with brick paths and an abundance of aromatics. Picnic tables are available for visitors who want to bring their lunch. A gift shop sells dried flowers, wreaths, books, essential oils, potpourri supplies, and various unique gifts.

Everything on the farm is grown organically. Weather permitting, most herbs and plants are available for purchase onsite and online around May 15. Depending on the variety, plants are shipped out in 3-in. pots or quart containers.

Well-Sweep hosts numerous classes and events throughout the year, including a Fall Flower Festival and Craft Market in early September. It involves 2 days of free lectures,



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presentations, and tours of the garden, live music, and a craft market of homemade products from both on and off the farm. Other events include medicinal herb walks and storytelling, cooking and preserving classes, herbal tea parties, soapmaking, pressed flower workshops, and more.

Well-Sweep Herb Farm also participates in local fairs and farmers markets throughout the year. The farm is open to visitors year-round.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Well-Sweep Herb Farm, 205 Mount Bethel Rd., Port Murray, N.J. 07865 (ph 908-852-5390; www.wellsweep.com).