

Bighorn Business Thrives In Wisconsin

"I wish I was 20 years younger because raising and selling bighorn sheep is a fascinating business," says 77-year-old Paul Canik. "We've just met so many fascinating people through this business."

Canik and his wife operate Beaver Creek Full Curl Ranch in Butternut, Wis. and sell a variety of Bighorn breed rams and ewes to hunting customers throughout the U.S. Over the past 20 years, Canik's sheep flock has numbered as high as 600 sheep of a variety of breeds: Black Hawaiian, Texas Dall, Corsican, Painted Desert and Rocky Mountain Bighorn hybrid crosses.

"I hunted deer in Texas for 20 years and was fascinated by the Bighorn sheep on those Texas hunting preserves," says Canik. "I decided it would be fun to try raising them on our farm back home in Wisconsin."

Canik recalls leaving Texas with a load

of sheep on a 70-degree day and by the time the truck arrived in northern Wisconsin, the temperature had dropped to 40 degrees below zero.

Some of Beaver Creek's customers are now also buying ewes and rams for breeding. "Some hunt clubs are starting to raise their own rams, so there's a growing market for ewes," he says. Canik says they sell all their rams at 3 mo. of age because older rams tend to fight and break their horns, which lessens their value.

In recent years, Canik has raised some Katahdin sheep, a hair breed that is raised primarily for its superior lamb chops and lean, meaty carcasses.

"Katahdin sheep produce delicious meat and they're low maintenance and easy to care for. The ewes all produce twins and we've had no problem getting rid of the ewes. Just



Paul Canik sells a variety of Bighorn rams and ewes to hunting customers throughout the U.S. Photos show a Black Hawaiian ram (left) and Rocky Mountain Bighorn - Alaskan Dall cross.

put an ad on Craigslist and the phone starts ringing."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Paul

Canik, Beaver Creek Full Curl Ranch, Butternut, Wis. (ph 715 769-3938; www.beaver creekfullcurlranch.com).

Business Is Booming For Small Batch Malting Company

"I'd been home brewing for years and originally had a vision of starting a craft-beer company that grows its own barley and hops," says Adam Wagner of Fisher, Minn. "The critical step in brewing beer is processing your raw barley into a malted barley product. As we began experimenting with malting our own barley, we learned there is a lot to the process. Our focus shifted to the growing and malting of barley, and that's how Vertical Malt got its start."

Wagner says they began malting 10-lb. batches in buckets and soon discovered that nobody manufactured small-batch malting equipment, so he and his father set out to develop their own.

Vertical Malt Company was started in December 2015 by Adam and his father, Tim, who operates a 2,100-acre farm in northwest Minnesota. Malt is made by soaking barley in water to start germination, then halting germination by drying the spouted grain with hot air. The malting process develops the enzymes needed to convert the grain's starches into fermentable sugars.

The Wagners developed several machine

prototypes and eventually settled on a two-vessel setup - a steeping tank for the initial soak and a rotating drum for germinating and drying. The pilot system makes a batch of 250 lbs. of malt and is capable of producing one batch per week. They're about to begin malting in a new 4,000-lb. unit and hope to add 3 more 4,000-lb. units by the end of 2017.

The Wagners are grateful for the assistance they've received from various partners in setting up the pilot plant. Their craft malting concept won a \$10,000 award in the Northwest Minnesota Foundation's IDEA competition, and Adam just learned that Vertical Malt will receive a value-added grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

"More craft brewers are coming online every month in our area, and most brewery startups need 800 to 1,500 lbs. of malt for a single batch of beer, so we're excited about the opportunities in the year ahead."

Adam says one of the advantages of Vertical Malt's small-scale malting is their ability to customize their malts to each brewer's needs and recipes. "We can do what large malt companies with huge batch sizes



Photos by Rolf Hagberg

The Wagners recently started malting in a new 4,000-lb. batch unit.

would struggle with: specifying varieties, kernel size, germination time, heat, and other factors to produce subtle flavor variations in small batches for individual customers. We can tell brewers the year the grain was grown, what field, even the days the grain was harvested or malted. Craft brewers appreciate that kind of information because beer lovers like to trace their beverage's heritage from 'field to glass.'"

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Malting process is started by germinating barley in water.

Their Grain Mills Can Turn Crops Into Money

If you're looking to tap into the market for locally-milled grain, Chris Hunt of Pleasant Hill Grain can help. He's a farmer himself who founded a mail-order company that carries a wide variety of grain mills and accessories.

"There is a lot of interest in milling organic grains for retailing locally," says Hunt. "We sell mills of various sizes and types for processing grain for food and feed. The right mill for you depends on what and how much you want to mill."

Choices range from using a hammer mill to choosing between a stone or steel burr mill. Hunt explains that a stone burr mill can't be used for oil seeds, but a steel burr can. Stone burr mills are often preferred for their cool grinds because it helps retain nutrients.

"If milling barley, wheat, rye or corn, the best type would be a stone burr mill," says Hunt. "A good one to start with would be an 8-in. Meadows stone burr mill. It is made in North Carolina, has a 20-lb. hopper and

produces about 50 lbs. of flour per hour."

The mill can be used for whole grain flour or can be adjusted to crack grain for cereal or for Southern-style grits. It can be ordered with or without a motor, mounting base or pulleys. Hunt recommends the Assembly C, which comes with a steel table for mounting and a 28-gal. Rubbermaid Brute container with a dolly for easy handling. The container sits underneath the table. Equipped with a 2 hp., 220V motor, it sells for around \$3,300 with shipping.

"From there you can go to a 12-in. stone that produces 100 lbs. per hour and sells for around \$5,500," says Hunt. "We sell Meadows mills, as well as KoMo mills from Germany and ABC Hanson mills from South Africa. The right one for you depends on output."

KoMo mills produce a very fine flour. While all mills can produce whole wheat flour, finer or specialty flours are determined by the mesh the flour can pass through.

"Bread flour is usually 40 to 50 mesh

consistency, while pastry flour is up to 100 mesh," says Hunt. "The Meadows mill can produce around 40 mesh flour, which is standard commercial flour. The KoMo can get finer. The flour produced depends on the stone and the type of grain being put through the mill."

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Chris Hunt founded a mail-order company that sells a wide variety of grain mills and accessories. This 8-in. Meadows stone burr mill is shown with a Rubbermaid container underneath.