

People & Places

Family recipe produces business

Charlotte Armstrong starts flapjack enterprise from scratch

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

DECLO, Idaho — Charlotte Armstrong cooks up a batch of flapjacks for her husband, Tom, almost every morning, and Tom never tires of the old family recipe given to Charlotte by her mother-in-law.

That recipe and five years of marketing and wheat variety research are the foundation of Cowboy Tom's Flapjacks, an enterprise Charlotte launched in 2005.

The product line, which focuses on flapjack mixes that include a blend of dry ingredients and unprocessed grains, started in Charlotte's kitchen after a friend raved about the flapjack mix Charlotte and Tom sent her for Christmas.

"Her question was 'Why aren't you guys selling this stuff?'" Charlotte said.

Tom flinched while Charlotte jumped in with both feet and started doing her homework and experimenting with different varieties of wheat.

Narrowing a long list down to five varieties — including one grown on the Armstrong ranch — she held taste tests in her home. Testers scored the flapjacks for texture, tenderness, flavor and appearance.

Everyone picked the same variety, and it wasn't the soft white wheat the Armstrongs grow, she said.

It was a dryland hard red variety. Dry farming makes the wheat naturally higher in protein, which gives it more flavor, she said.

"That's the difference; that's what you taste," she said.

The grower of the winning variety had grown wheat organically, but not certified, for 25 years and was particular about his production. Charlotte was



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Charlotte Armstrong works on some of her Cowboy Tom products. She started the Declo, Idaho, enterprise 10 years ago.

Western Innovator

Charlotte Armstrong

Occupation: Owns and operates Cowboy Tom's Flapjacks with her husband, Tom

Location: Declo, Idaho

Founded: 2005

Products: Flapjack mixes, including whole wheat and gluten-free teff and buckwheat, maple syrup

Recognition: TechHelp Idaho's 2009 Spirit of Continuous Innovation

Web: cowboytoms.com

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She also sells wholesale through a Billings, Mont., wholesale market and the prestigious Gourmet Market at the Dallas Market Center.

Doors have opened for her every step of the way, and customer requests have led her to expand her offerings to include maple syrup — which began production at the Food Tech Center and is now produced at her on-farm facility — and gluten-free grains.

She sources gluten-free buckwheat nearby in Cassia County and gluten-free teff, an Ethiopian food grain, from a Boise grower.

She also wrote a tall tale — the Legend of Cowboy Tom — to accompany her flapjack mix and syrup in a gift pack and was embraced by the cowboy artists whose works she used to illustrate the book.

"It's been much, much more than I ever thought it would, and it keeps growing," Charlotte said of the business.

A lot of people have tried to figure out the recipe and what makes Cowboy Tom's Flapjacks so good, but they can't, she said.

Eighteen years ago, she retired from an accounting job with Kraft Foods to marry Tom, who was managing a cattle ranch in Arco, Idaho. Now, between production, sales and trade shows, she's putting in long hours, she said.

Cowboy Tom's now processes and markets 12 to 16 tons of grain and at least 3,000 bottles of syrup annually.

While the Armstrongs are thrilled with the success of Cowboy Tom's Flapjacks, Charlotte has built the business with the intention of selling it — not working until she's 80. But it has given her new experiences and has allowed her to push past business fears. It has also forged strong relationships and brought many personal rewards, she said.

confident in the quality of his grain and was ready to move ahead.

Then she had to find someone to do the processing, packaging and labeling. She found a great partner in the University of Idaho Food Technology Center in Caldwell and her "packaging posse" of grandchildren.

The company's flapjack ingredients are individually pack-

aged at the Food Tech Center and assembled into retail and wholesale packaging at the Cowboy Tom's facility back at the ranch.

Charlotte started out peddling her wheat flapjack product to independent shops but expanded sales to Whole Foods and Natural Grocers and at the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas.

University of Kentucky shows off hemp plots

By BRUCE SCHREINER
Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP) — Tobacco production has waned in Wolfe County, so its agricultural extension agent checked out hemp research plots Thursday to see if the crop that's just starting a comeback could grow into a substitute for farmers in his region of the Appalachian foothills.

Daniel Wilson, the agent, liked what he saw while inspecting stands of hemp — marijuana's non-intoxicating cousin — at a University of Kentucky research farm. Some hemp plants towered eight to 10 feet tall.

Hemp could become an option on the acreages where tobacco once dominated in his hilly county, he said. Wolfe County used to produce up to 3 million pounds of burley tobacco during the crop's hey-

day. The county's production is now 100,000 to 150,000 pounds yearly, he said.

"With tobacco out, it's got good potential to replace some of that," Wilson said. "Anything that can help offset some of the income for some of these farmers, I'm for it."

Hemp is prized for oils, seeds and fiber. The crop was historically used for rope but has many other uses: clothing and mulch from the fiber; hemp milk and cooking oil from the seeds; and soaps and lotions.

The challenge isn't growing hemp, which thrived in Kentucky's soil and climate until getting caught up in the government's fight against marijuana. The question is whether farmers can find reliable markets.

Wilson was among about 250 people touring the hemp plots. Participants included



AP Photo/Bruce Schreiner

University of Kentucky agronomist David Williams talks to a group checking out research plots of hemp at the school's research farm Aug. 13 in Lexington. Kentucky has been at the forefront of efforts to revive the crop.

farmers, processors and ag extension agents. Some people took photos of a crop that remains a novelty.

UK agronomist David Williams said hemp's long-term viability will hinge on whether it can fetch a strong enough profit for farmers. Without that assurance, farm-

ers will raise other crops.

"We do have strong evidence that suggests it will be at least in that neighborhood with the current commodities as far as profit for farmers goes," he said. "All that's determined by the consumer."

Hemp products sold in the U.S. last year had a total re-

tail value of at least \$620 million, according to the Hemp Industries Association. The crop is grown in many other countries around the world.

Growing hemp in the U.S. without a federal permit was banned in 1970 due to its classification as a controlled substance related to marijuana. Hemp and marijuana are the same species, but hemp has a negligible amount of the psychoactive compound that gives marijuana users a high.

For now, growing hemp is strictly limited. The federal farm bill restricts hemp production to research projects designated by agriculture departments in states that allow the crop to be grown.

Twenty-six states have removed barriers to hemp production, according to Vote Hemp, a group that advocates for the plant's legal cultivation.

Space salad: 1 small bite for man, 1 giant leaf for mankind

By SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — These are the salad days of scientific research on the International Space Station. On Monday, for the first time astronauts munched on red romaine lettuce that they grew in space.

After clicking their lettuce leaves like wine glasses, three astronauts tasted them with a bit of Italian balsamic vinegar and extra-virgin olive oil.

Astronaut Kjell Lindgren pronounced it awesome, while Scott Kelly compared the taste to arugula. They talked about how the veggies added color to life in space.

If astronauts are to go farther in space, they will need to grow their own food and this was an experiment to test that.

Astronauts grew space station lettuce last year but had to ship it back to Earth for testing and didn't get to taste it.

Celebration of life planned for Chauncey M. Hubbard

MONROE, Ore. — Friends and family are welcome to a celebration of life in honor of Chauncey M. Hubbard at 3 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 23.

He died April 24 at age 96. He was born Oct. 27, 1918, in Spur, Texas, to Chauncey Mulks Hubbard and Mary Jane (White) Hubbard. In 1939, the family moved to Monroe, Ore., where young Chauncey lived for the rest of his life. He farmed and raised

Hampshire sheep with his father before starting out on his own.

Chauncey was preceded in death by daughter Marilyn Hubbard Reedy; mother and father Chauncey Mulks and Mary Jane Hubbard; and wife Kleva June (Lindseth).

The celebration will be held at Hubbard Memorial Park, 27511 W. Ingram Island Road, Monroe, Ore. For more information, call Cuevas at 541-554-1439.

Calendar

Friday-Sunday Aug. 21-23

Clackamas County Fair & Rodeo, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Clackamas County Event Center, Canby, Ore.

Saturday, Aug. 22

Rural Living Field Day, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Howell Territorial Park, Sauvie Island, Ore.

Thursday-Saturday Aug. 27-29

Farwest Nursery Show, 8 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Oregon Convention Center, Portland.

Aug. 28-Sept. 7

Oregon State Fair
10 a.m.-11 p.m. Oregon State Fairgrounds, Salem.

Thursday, Sept. 10

Oregon State University Dairy Open House, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., OSU Dairy, Corvallis. The OSU Dairy has been converting to a grazing-based operation.

Thursday-Friday Sept. 17-18

California Poultry Federation Annual Meeting and Conference, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monterey

Plaza Hotel, Monterey, Calif.

Thursday-Sunday Sept. 17-20

Mount Angel Oktoberfest, 11 a.m.-11:55 p.m. Downtown Mount Angel, 1-855-899-6338. Mount Angel's Oktoberfest will celebrate 50 years of the festival, bringing together 350,000 people to celebrate the harvest and family fun.

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