

Dairy cow delivers pizzas to shocked customers

Did somebody order extra cheese?

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

EAGLE, Idaho — Several customers in Eagle who ordered pizzas Oct. 6 were stunned when they opened their doors to see a dairy cow staring at them.

“Really, I’m dumbfounded,” Michael Marzocco said after opening his door to find his pizzas being delivered by Josie, a Jersey cow, and Meridian dairyman Clint Jackson.

The reaction of his wife, Courtney, was one of astonishment mixed with awe.

“I want to keep her,” was the first thing she said. “She’s so pretty. You don’t realize how beautiful they are until you are so close like this.”

As Josie, Jackson and an entourage of Dairy West employees walked down the sidewalk, pizza deliverymen in tow, the scene attracted curious neighbors who filed out of their homes to pet the heifer or snap photos.

“Only in Idaho,” said Rich Christensen, who just moved here from California and who was one of several neighbors who received free pizzas handed out by Rocky Mountain Pizzeria Grill deliverymen.

“I feel like I’m in Idaho now,” he said.

The event, in its third year, is a fun way for Idaho’s dairy industry to help connect urban consumers with where their dairy comes from, said Cindy Miller, a spokeswoman for Dairy West, formerly known as United Dairymen of Idaho.

“Not everybody can come out to a dairy farm so this is one way we can bring the farm a little bit closer to them,” she said. “For them to see an actual dairy farmer who cares about



Courtesy of Greg Kreller

Meridian, Idaho, dairyman Clint Jackson with one of his Jersey cows, Josie, who helped him deliver pizzas in the Eagle area Oct. 6. Dairy West, formerly known as United Dairymen of Idaho, uses the event as a way to connect with consumers by bringing the farm to them.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Courtney Marzocco pets a cow that, with the help of its owner, Meridian dairyman Clint Jackson, in green shirt, delivered pizzas to the Marzocco home in Eagle, Idaho, on Oct. 6. Dairy West, formerly known as United Dairymen of Idaho, uses the event as a way to connect with consumers by bringing the farm to them.

the kind of milk he produces is pretty important.”

Miller said Dairy West chose Rocky Mountain because the restaurant serves only Idaho cheese at its nine locations in Idaho and Utah and it chose a cow as a way to embed the moment in people’s minds.

“It’s very shocking when people see a cow walking down their street with a farmer delivering their pizza,” she said. “It shouldn’t be something they will forget.”

At each stop, Josie attracted a crowd of excited and somewhat bewildered people.

“Why is there a cow here?”

one puzzled kid asked.

The answer, provided by a Dairy West employee: “Someone ordered a pizza with extra cheese.”

Jackson has helped make the pizza deliveries for three years and chose and trained Josie specifically for the event.

“They couldn’t keep me away,” he said. “It’s a fun way for us to get out and connect with some people and let them know how much we appreciate them supporting the dairy industry.”

Jackson said he also uses the occasion to remind people that when they buy Idaho dairy products, they support an industry that has a large impact on the state’s economy.

Dairy is Idaho’s top farm commodity in terms of cash receipts and is responsible for 39,000 jobs directly and indirectly, according to a University of Idaho study.

“When they order something as common as a pizza, that’s supporting the dairy industry here in Idaho and we appreciate it,” Jackson said.

Oregon initial hazelnut price drops below \$1 per pound

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon farmers will receive at least 96.5 cents per pound of hazelnuts this year, a decrease of 18 percent from last year’s initial price.

The price slide comes at a time when hazelnut growers are also expecting lower yields, with Oregon’s total production projected to be 36,000 tons, down from 44,000 tons last year.

“With a small crop it’s going to be tough for everyone,” said Doug Olsen, farmer and president of the Hazelnut Growers Bargaining Association.

Price fluctuations in Oregon are influenced by the hazelnut crop in Turkey, where low yields caused by a deep freeze drove up the domestic price to \$1.70 per pound in 2014, the highest on record.

A bumper Turkish crop in 2017 has had the opposite effect on Oregon’s initial price, though farmers could still end up with a higher price if processors receive premiums.

Whether farmers will make a profit this year varies by individual, since people have different levels of debt and establishment costs for their orchards.

“It kind of depends where you are, how mature your orchard is,” said Nik Wiman, an Oregon State University orchard specialist.

According to a conservative estimate by OSU, farmers who plant the popular Jefferson variety earn a profit in the seventh year of orchard production at prices of \$1 per pound, he said.

At roughly \$1 per pound, farmers in Oregon will probably still be motivated to continue planting the crop,

said Olsen.

“It might slow down a little bit but it’s still one of the better paying crops right now,” he said.

Negotiations between farmers and hazelnut processors dragged on longer than normal in 2017, with the parties winding up in mediation to set an initial price.

There was some disagreement about how high the price could rise without hurting demand, particularly in China, a major market for Oregon’s crop, said Terry Ross, executive director of the Hazelnut Growers Bargaining Association.

Ultimately, data from the Oregon Hazelnut Marketing Board showed that China’s demand for our hazelnuts is “elastic,” meaning that higher prices would curtail purchases, Ross said.

“Once all the factors about market conditions were presented and discussed, there was no other solution than the price that was set,” he said.

Jeff Fox, executive director of the Hazelnut Growers of Oregon cooperative, said he was disappointed by the price decline, since the industry has seen large Turkish crops before.

Oregon producers have the opportunity to earn a premium based on growing higher quality hazelnuts than Turkish farmers, he said.

“Hopefully this doesn’t impact their behavior as far as planting but I suspect it will,” Fox said of domestic growers.

While the price has fallen since 2016, this year’s initial price is nonetheless the sixth highest on record, said Larry George, president of the George Packing Co.

Industry seeks to reassure consumers as wine country burns

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Amid reports of burned-out wineries and smoke-shrouded vineyards, California wine industry groups are seeking to ease consumer fears as flames consume the iconic Napa and Sonoma county hillsides.

Growers’ associations note that the harvest that was underway when wildfires kicked up late Oct. 8 was 90 percent complete. Smoke from nearby fires would have to cover vineyards for a long time to taint the grapes that are still there, and wineries can take measures to prevent smoke from damaging fermenting grapes, said Gladys Horiuchi, spokeswoman for the San Francisco-based Wine Institute.

“It seems to be a pretty fluid situation because a lot of people can’t get back into their properties (to assess damage) because of the evacuations,” Horiuchi said on Oct. 10. “The good news is that the humidity is starting to get higher than it was and the winds have died down. Obviously everyone is



Eric Risberg/Associated Press

Smoke from wildfires in the Sonoma Valley makes its way toward the Napa Valley, in this view from the Carneros wine region Tuesday in Napa, Calif. Worried California vintners surveyed the damage to their vineyards and wineries Tuesday after wildfires swept through several counties whose famous names have become synonymous with fine food and drink.

very concerned.”

As for whether extensive fire damage in the northern San Francisco Bay area could create a shortage of grapes or wines, Horiuchi noted that 70 percent of California’s wine grape harvest by volume occurs in the inland valleys. Only 10 percent of the grapes by volume are in the Napa and Sonoma regions, she said.

Still, the region’s grapes are the state’s most lucrative, and the premium wines from Napa

and Sonoma are a big reason the value of U.S. wine exports reached a record \$1.62 billion in 2016, according to the Wine Institute. Ninety percent of the exports were from California.

Wine production in 2016 was valued at \$729.5 million in Napa County and \$586.5 million in Sonoma County, according to the two counties’ most recent crop production reports.

In all, the wildfires that have whipped through the wine country killed at least 10 peo-

ple, destroyed 1,500 homes and businesses and sent thousands fleeing for shelters, The Associated Press reported. Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency in Napa, Sonoma, Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Nevada and Yuba counties.

The largest fires are the Tubbs Fire, which started near Calistoga and was at 28,000 acres as of Oct. 11, and the Atlas Fire in Napa County, which had grown to 42,349 acres, according to the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The fires prompted closures of dozens of major roads.

Among the wineries reported destroyed was Signorella Estate in Napa, Paradise Ridge in Santa Rosa and White Rock Vineyards in Napa, the wineries reported on social media.

At Signorella Estate, winemaker Pierre Birebent and others were on the property trying to fight back the flames but retreated and made it out safely when the fire overcame the building, owner Ray Signorella Jr. said in a Facebook post.

“It has been a devastating fire,” said Karissa Kruse, president of Sonoma County Wine-

growers. “At this time, we are still assessing the specific damage to Sonoma County vineyards as well as to our communities and neighbors. Reports of fire damage to wineries, businesses and vineyards continues to grow.”

The organization’s top priority now is to ensure the well-being of families, employees, volunteers and others, Kruse said in a statement emailed to the Capital Press.

“We are continuing to closely monitor the situation, but we are very proud of how our community is already coming together to support each other in this time of crisis.”

In the coming weeks as damage assessments become clearer, the California Association of Winegrape Growers will work with the state’s congressional delegation, federal officials and other wine industry organizations to make sure affected growers have adequate disaster response and recovery resources, the organization stated in a news release.

It had already been a challenging year for wine producers. Triple-digit afternoon

temperatures in California’s prime wine-producing regions early last month left vintners scrambling to take protective measures to keep grapes from shriveling on the vines before crews could pick them.

But the heat also accelerated harvests, Horiuchi said.

“We had heat spikes in August and September that moved everything up by about a week,” she said. “More of it came in than usual. ... It’s mostly the later-maturing reds that may not have gotten in.”

If vineyards are burned and have to be replaced, it could be four years before they produce a crop that can be turned into wine, she said.

But fire crews are working to save vineyards if they can, said Shawn Boyd, a state Office of Emergency Services spokesman.

“We do know that this is a huge part of the California economy, and that is something we always take into consideration whenever we’re being strategic with how we mobilize staff, equipment and firefighters,” Boyd said. “It is definitely a priority.”

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