

People & Places

Startup business supports local ag

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Local meat and potato producers and processors are the foundation of a new, first-of-its-kind business in south-central Idaho that delivers local, high-quality beef, pork, chicken and potatoes to customers' doorsteps.

The Meat and Potato Company began operations in November and is already seeing high demand for its restaurant-grade products.

The business is the brainchild of Travis Dixon, who spent 25 years in foodservice sales.

"Our purpose is to give our customers the experience and flavor of a steakhouse delivered right to their door," he said.

A little more than eight years ago, Dixon started thinking about a home-delivery service that could provide local, high-quality products directly to consumers.

"I always thought there was going to be a need for something like this," he said.

He started looking into website domain names and purchased meatandpotato.com.

"I was hoping to do something in the future, figuring people would be buying things online," he said.

He also started thinking about partnerships with local ranchers, producers and processors. But with a busy family life and his



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Travis Dixon, owner of the Meat and Potato Company, with some of the products he offers for home delivery.

job as a district sales manager for a full-line foodservice distributor it was easy to lose focus.

Growing requests from friends and acquaintances wanting restaurant-type products they couldn't get at retail stores got him back on track.

They were looking for things like aged products for steakhouses, higher-end products like giant potatoes and colossal shrimp — products that allow restaurants to

provide a good eating experience, he said.

His business can deliver on those items, as well as high-quality, affordable items people can get in grocery stores.

"We're trying to hit a couple of niches," he said.

The business also delivers on consumers' growing desire for local foods from a locally owned business that keeps money in the local economy, he said.

The company's aged beef

Western Innovator

TRAVIS DIXON

Owner: Meat and Potato Company

Age: 44

Location: Twin Falls, Idaho

Background: 25 years in foodservice sales

Affiliations: Approved by the Idaho Potato Commission, working toward a local supplier listing with the Idaho Beef Council

Education: Studied business at College of Southern Idaho

Family: Wife, Jamie; son, Teylor, 18; daughter Alyx, 20

Online: For more information, visit: meatandpotato.com



comes from cattle raised at Five Rivers feedlot in Malta, Idaho, southwest of Burley. All of the cattle are from the Northwest, and 63% are from Idaho. All of the feed for the cattle is grown in the Mini-Cassia area.

The company's jumbo russet potatoes and unique blend of rainbow fingerling potatoes, sought after by top chefs, are grown in the Magic Valley and Mini-Cassia areas.

Dixon has also partnered with Independent Meat of Twin Falls to provide a wide variety of quality pork products, and he sources his hormone-free, antibiotic-free chicken from Draper Valley Farms in Oregon and Washington.

He wants product that is "the closest I can get it and the best I can find," he said.

The business sources product from more than 300 family farms in Idaho and the

Pacific Northwest.

In addition to local meat and potatoes, the company provides lobster tails and jumbo and colossal shrimp.

The company offers free local delivery and is currently shipping to 38 states, sending out a couple of hundred boxes a month.

"I have orders going out all over the place," he said.

Another plus for environmentally minded customers is that all the company's packaging is recyclable or biodegradable.

Dixon currently operates out of another company's commercial facility but is planning to open his own retail store later this year and expand his offerings to other local vegetables, fruit and dairy products. He is also pursuing local bison and lamb to add to his offerings.

"I'm just itching for a retail location to sell that kind of stuff," he said.

Oregon maltster wins international contest

By JAYSON JACOBY
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY, Ore. — Behind the glass of beer, with its photogenic bubbles and foamy white head, are Tom Hutchison and his bags of Eastern Oregon barley.

Hutchison's place in the brewing business isn't the most prominent.

Yet aside from the typical odes to pure spring water and to hops, the dried flowers that infuse beer with its mouth-puckering bitter bite, the building blocks for a pint of ale or lager are stacked in Hutchison's building near the railroad tracks just off Broadway Street in Baker City.

And when it comes to



Jayson Jacoby/EO Media Group

Tom Hutchison, who owns Gold Rush Malt in Baker City, Ore., checks the steel drum where barley is dried.

malting barley, a key ingredient in beer as well as many distilled spirits such as whiskey and vodka, Hutchison occupies a lofty place among his peers.

Hutchison, who started Gold Rush Malt in 2016, swept three awards at the

annual Craft Malt Conference put on by the Craft Maltsters Guild Feb. 10-12.

Hutchison won gold medals for both his pilsner and pale malts during the online awards ceremony that took place Feb. 12.

He'll also be caretaker

of the traveling Malt Cup Trophy for the next year as recipient of the best of show award.

Hutchison said he knew he had won at least one award. Officials from the Guild told him that in advance to ensure he would be watching the awards ceremony, which, like the rest of the annual conference, took place remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

But when he heard his name called not once but three times, he was, he admits, "just stunned."

"It was way more than I expected," Hutchison said on Feb. 16. "It's the first time I've entered."

He was the first maltster to win two gold medals in a sin-

gle competition, according to the Craft Maltsters Guild.

Hutchison competed against 27 other maltsters from seven countries, 17 states and one Canadian province.

Each of the 46 samples of malted barley was evaluated in multiple ways.

Researchers at Montana State University's Barley, Malt & Brewing Quality Lab tested each sample.

Then, judges at 17 sites around the U.S. and Canada compared the entries' aroma and flavor, including nibbling on the kernels.

Finally, in the last round, additional judges reviewed the lab results and the other judges' findings to pick the winners.

Cooperative supports farming for people of color

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

A Washington nonprofit is forming a cooperative for Black, Indigenous and other farmers of color.

"You have to start from ground zero, building a farming community of people of color," said Mercy Kariuki-McGee, founder of the Haki Farmers Collective in Olympia.

Nearly 49,000 farmers in the U.S. identified as Black in the 2017 Census of Agriculture, a 5% increase from 46,582 in 2012. They represent 1.4% of all farmers.

The collective is named "Haki," which means "justice" in Swahili, a widely spoken language in Africa.

The Haki collective wants to enhance farming traditions and develop a new generation of farmers of color.

"That knowledge does exist, and farmers are going back to that," she said, pointing to organic and regenerative agriculture methods.

Kariuki-McGee and her daughter, Elisa McGee, started the organi-

zation in 2020 as part of the protests over George Floyd's death in May 2020. Kariuki-McGee and her family have been involved in helping the city of Olympia develop public safety and community outreach procedures.

Kariuki-McGee was struck by the presence of a garden and free kitchen in the middle of protests in Seattle, used as a "healing" space filled with messages of hope and unity. She wanted to develop a similar garden in the Olympia-Tacoma area.

The Haki collective will use part of a community garden donated by the nonprofit organization Garden-Raised Bounty, or GRuB.

The collective is also receiving a larger piece of farmland from the South Sound Community Farmland Trust to develop a BIPOC — for Black, Indigenous and People of Color — Farm.

WSU, Black farmer collective look to raise 'culturally relevant' crops

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

A new collective for Black farmers and Washington State University are working to grow crops originally raised by Black, Asian and South American immigrants in their home countries.

A \$40,000 WSU BioAg grant will allow the study of "culturally

relevant" staple crop economies within Black, Indigenous and People of Color farmer and consumer groups, said Aba Kiser, project manager for WSU Food Systems. That includes grains, greens and roots, said Mercy Kariuki-McGee, founder of the nonprofit Haki Farmers Collective in Olympia. Crops include sorghum, millet, cassava, yams and medicinal plants.

"(They) are very, very healthy for you and the ones that people are craving for," Kariuki-McGee said. Kariuki-McGee also points to use of

the entire crop, such as eating pumpkin or bean leaves.

"Everything that comes out of the garden is actually used. It doesn't go to waste," she said.

Kariuki-McGee will be project coordinator. Her organization is called the Haki Farmers Collective.

"It's an important piece of removing systematic racism when you can make food available to those who need it most, and it's a way to close the gap of food sovereignty," she said. "It's very hard for the immigrants, who usually end up being the most marginalized, to have access to food that is healthy, affordable and easy to grow."

Indigenous communities used the crops for a long time, but the "shifting landscape of migration" changed the way people eat and take care of their bodies.

"In America, you shift the way you eat when you get here, and you try to adapt as much as possible, but the diet is not always what is good for you," she said. "Trying to introduce those traditional foods can be very beneficial dollar-wise and health-wise."



https://hakifarmers.org/

CALENDAR

TUESDAY, MARCH 9

Intentional Adulteration-Food Defense (online): 8 a.m.-noon. This Food Defense Course will help you mitigate the risks and hazards of intentional contamination in food operations by protecting vulnerable elements in the agrifood chain and food production operations. We will explore Food Defense Plans to help you build barriers around vulnerable points to prohibit intentional adulteration. The course fee is \$495/each individual. Janna Ham-

lett, 208-731-9363, jannahamlett@techhelp.org

TUESDAY MARCH 30

Practical Sensory Programs for Factories and Quality Managers (online): 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The Practical Sensory Program course is designed around a learn-and-apply model. Each participant will get a kit to have hands-on activities to reinforce the concepts learned. He or she will walk away with practical skills that can be applied immediately. The course fee

is \$285/each individual. Contact: Catherine Cantley, 208-426-2181, catherinecantley@techhelp.org

FRIDAY APRIL 16

AgForestry Leadership Class 41 Graduation: 5 p.m. Red Lion Hotel, Wenatchee, Wash. Celebrate the graduation of AgForestry Leadership Class 41. This celebration was rescheduled from its origination April 10 date. Table sponsorships are available. Cost: \$60/adults, \$20/child. Website: http://agforestry.org/graduation-class-41/



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E.J. Harris/EO Media Group File
The former Lost Valley Farm outside Boardman, Ore., now Easterday Dairy.

CORRECTION

A cutline accompanying a photograph published on the front page of the Feb. 19 edition with a story about the Easterday Dairy incorrectly stated that the farm would soon be auctioned.

The file photo has been used many times, and the cutline originally was published with a story about the farm, then known as Lost Valley Farm, when it was to be sold in the former owner's bankruptcy.

The Capital Press regrets the error.