



TRY HOMEMADE FLAVORS LIKE HOW NOW BROWN COW, PEANUT BUTTER BLUNDER, RAZAMATAZ, UDDER ME MINT AND MORE.

## Creaming THE COMPETITION

BY MONICA ALBERS

**DESPITE FRIGID SOUTH DAKOTA WIND CHILLS, THERE'S A LINE OUT THE DOOR OF A NEW SIOUX FALLS ICE CREAM SHOP ON SATURDAY NIGHTS. IT'S BEEN THAT WAY ALL WINTER, THE GENERAL MANAGER SAYS, BECAUSE PEOPLE CAN TASTE THE QUALITY.**

**Stensland Family Farms Ice Cream and Country Store** may be new to Sioux Falls, but just 15 miles east of the city in Larchwood, Iowa, their 170 dairy cows are part of a four-generation family farm. Here, cows graze 1,500 acres of organic cropland and are milked at their convenience thanks to robotic milking equipment. Milk is processed at the on-site creamery and is shipped straight to the shop.

**General manager Mark Stensland** says their pasteurization process allows

extra enzymes to remain in the milk, giving it a fuller body and better taste. "It's a slower process and it costs more money, but it's a healthier process," said Stensland. "You'll notice the difference."

You might have to look a little harder to find another difference between Stensland's and any other business in town: half of its employees, from the farm to the store, are family. Each with their own role and area of expertise.

Two Stensland brothers made it their goal to return the family dairy farm to full production in 2004, and other family members soon got on board. Their storefront for their creamery's products opened its doors this past October. Stensland says some relatives bring marketing skills, others customer service experience, and even the family's middle-school-

age kids are excited about getting involved. Employees without family ties to the group are often found through family or friends' recommendations.

"We have all the right players," he said. "Whenever anybody comes on board and starts working with us, even though they're not blood, they become family."

All 24 ice cream flavors were developed in-house, and they continue to create more. They're hoping to eventually make customers choose between 100 flavors. Some of the most popular flavors, like Salted Caramel Pecan and Mama's Mounds, come with homemade twists – the latter containing homemade Mounds bars and toasted coconut. Butter Brickle Ice Cream has chunks of brickle made by hand in the store's kitchen. Stensland says the family

takes time to create and taste-test new flavors together, but new experiments have had to take a back seat while they try to handle an increasing demand.

The response has been big, even while the ice cream store has only been operational during the coldest months of the year. Stensland says they're strategizing now to manage what they're expecting to be a busy summer season ahead.

"The response has been absolutely phenomenal, very, very supportive. People are appreciating that we're here," said Stensland. "I didn't expect the response that we've received. It's just been phenomenal."

Stensland Family Farms is also keeping up production and sales for other dairy products, like milk, hard cheeses and cheese curds, from the farm. Those continue to be sold at their Sioux Falls



storefront, and in several locations in the area, including Pomegranate Market, The Co-Op Natural Foods, and several Hy-Vee locations.

Though South Dakota is one of the most ag-heavy areas in the country, this farm-to-table niche was something Stensland saw a need for in the area. More people than ever want to know where their food is coming from, he says, and businesses like theirs offer a clear answer. Expanding on that farm-to-table concept, they're also working to partner with area farmers to incorporate local eggs, honey, produce, and baked goods. Their milk products are all non-GMO, and they've chosen to avoid using rBST growth hormones. Stensland says a lot of their work revolves around education – with some people on board right away with their local, non-GMO stance, but others more hesitant. "Those are the individuals that we feel that's it's our job to educate, and not convince, but to show these individuals what the difference is. And people can taste the difference in our milk."

Stensland says the group is excited about harnessing those food-conscious interests to help the business grow, but that it's not just the products that might be drawing people into their store for something sweet. It's also their story.

"We welcome them into our home, that's kind of the concept we have here at the store," said Stensland. "There's a lot of love that goes into making this ice cream every day."

**For more information on where to find Stensland Family Farms products, visit their website at [StenslandFamilyFarms.com](http://StenslandFamilyFarms.com) or call (605) 271-0833.**

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