

DAIRYMEN'S DIGEST

A PUBLICATION OF
ASSOCIATED MILK PRODUCERS INC.
SUMMER 2019



RINGING IN A
BRAND
& PROMISE



ALSO FEATURING YC snapshots | Pushing for USMCA | Preparing for visitors

Summer 2019 | Volume 50

Associated Milk Producers Inc.

**Dairymen's Digest
Editorial / Design Team**

Sarah Schmidt, Editor
Nickie Sabo, Graphic Designer

Ph: 507-354-8295
Email: schmidts@ampi.com
Website: www.ampi.com

AMPI Co-Presidents and CEOs

Donn DeVelder
Sheryl Meshke

DAIRYMEN'S DIGEST

Published four times a year in New Ulm, Minn. 56073
by Associated Milk Producers Inc.

Periodical postage paid at New Ulm, Minn.,
and additional mailing offices.

Office of Publication:

Associated Milk Producers Inc.,
315 North Broadway, New Ulm, MN 56073

USPS Publication No.

925840 (ISSN 0745-9033)

Postmaster:

Send form 3579 to P.O. Box 455, New Ulm, MN 56073

Editorial Office:

Editor, AMPI, Dairymen's Digest
P.O. Box 455, New Ulm, MN 56073

Subscription Rate: \$12 per year. Single copy, \$3. Mail
your subscriptions, address changes and renewals
to Associated Milk Producers Inc., P.O. Box 455,
New Ulm, MN 56073. For speedy service regarding
your subscription, provide the old address, new
address and enclose your latest mailing label.

ABOUT THE COVER

*AMPI is ringing in a new
venture with the launch of
the Dinner Bell Creamery
brand and Co-op Crafted
mark, which provide oppor-
tunities for co-op families
to share their dairy stories
directly with consumers.*



Ringling the bell

As a child, the ring of a cast-iron dinner bell would bring me to the table on our family's southern Minnesota farm. My mother would then proceed to tell us the origin — our farm's barns, pastures and gardens — of nearly every dish on the table.

I'll bet many of you can share a similar story. That's the inspiration behind AMPI's newly launched Dinner Bell Creamery brand and Co-op Crafted promise, as well as the focus of the cover story on page 8.

Consumers will soon learn that gathering with family and friends for a satisfying meal calls for a visit to Dinner Bell Creamery where you'll find real dairy products. But there's more, a lot more. We will point to the barns, pastures, farmers, buttermakers and cheesemakers responsible for the goodness.

Most importantly, every visit to the creamery comes with the Co-op Crafted promise. That promise highlights more than 50 years as AMPI. It illustrates how family farmers partner with skilled craftsmen to make award-winning dairy products.

We've always made good food that way. That's why countless companies continue to wrap their brands around our products. We've just added another way to add value to our farmers-owners' investment on the farm and in the cooperative. Through Dinner Bell Creamery, we will market directly to the consumer. They'll learn the value of our Co-op Crafted promise.

I think you'll agree, it's time to ring the bell.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheryl Meshke".

Sheryl Meshke
Co-President and CEO

RINGING IN A BRAND & PROMISE

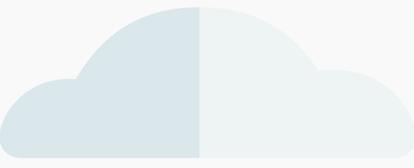
Seventeen-year-old Laurel Luehmann pauses from her early-morning chores to marvel at the sunrise. It's one of the many reasons she's proud to have been raised on the dairy farm her family has owned and operated for four generations in the rolling hills of Minnesota's Winona County.

With the recent launch of AMPI's new Dinner Bell Creamery brand and the accompanying Co-op Crafted mark (see sidebar), co-op families like Laurel's now have the opportunity to share their story with consumers. It's a strategic move that will help ensure a long-term market for their milk in a changing consumer environment.

"For the co-op's first 50 years, we focused on making products other companies could wrap their brands around," said Marshall Reece, AMPI's senior vice president of sales and marketing. "To survive in the next 50 years and beyond, we need to also market directly to the consumer and share the promise behind the food they buy."

That promise comes from places like Rolling Ridge Acres, the farm





“As dairy farmers, we need to understand the consumer side of this business. They have choices and their dollars will follow.”

Paul Luehmann
Lewiston, Minn.

Laurel calls home. Her parents Paul and Katie Luehmann partner with Paul’s parents Gary and Donna to operate a 350-cow dairy. Paul and Katie’s eight children also play important roles on the farm.

Dinner Bell Creamery branding provides the Luehmans and fellow AMPI dairy farmer-owners the opportunity to better communicate with consumers about how they work cooperatively to produce and make wholesome, great-tasting dairy products. Messages about how they carefully care for their cows and their land can also be shared.

Gary, Donna and Paul have all served as AMPI elected officials, giving them front-row seats to watch their co-op evolve over the decades. In their view, adding a brand to forge a relationship with consumers is a smart step toward more effectively marketing members’ dairy products.

“As dairy farmers, we need to understand the consumer side of this business. They have choices and their dollars will follow,” Paul said. “We need to respect their desire to know

about what we’re doing on the farm.”

AMPI-labeled butter products are being transitioned to the Dinner Bell brand. Cheese products will be packaged under the new label by the end of the year.

The branded product line is being sold to AMPI retail and food-service customers. It supplements the co-op’s existing butter packaging business.

From a promotional standpoint, now is an excellent time to launch a co-op brand, said Sarah Schmidt, vice president of public affairs.

“Only a few years ago, it would have been challenging for AMPI to financially support the rollout of its own brand,” she said. “Now, thanks to social media outlets such as Instagram and Facebook, we can spread our message for a fraction of the cost.”

Butter bearing the Dinner Bell label is now selling in Holiday gas station stores and being served in restaurants across the country. AMPI customer Restaurant Depot is also selling Dinner Bell butter

continued on page 10

Making our mark

Every Dinner Bell Creamery package includes the new Co-op Crafted mark, a graphic reminder of how AMPI family farmers partner with skilled craftsmen to make award-winning dairy products.

“The mark is a way to quickly tell our story and share our promise — AMPI family farms care for their land and animals, and partner with skilled craftsmen to make award-winning dairy products,” said Sheryl Meshke, co-president and CEO.

The new mark’s design revolves around the cow, which is symbolic of the animal that is central to dairying. It’s a subtle reminder to consumers that AMPI members recognize providing top-notch care for their animals and the land they live on is the right thing to do.

The mark’s circular design is also symbolic of AMPI’s cooperative business model. AMPI dairy farmer-owners value the benefit of uniting as a cooperative to deliver quality dairy products to consumers.





Representing three generations of the Luehmann family are, from left, Jackson, Gloria, Laurel, Gary, Julia, Donna, Paul, Abigail, Katie, Charlotte, Olivia and Peyton. Together they operate Rolling Ridge Farm in southeast Minnesota. Gary is proud to point out the farm's AMPI patron number is 127, signifying they were one of the original members when the co-op formed in 1969. The recent launch of AMPI's new Dinner Bell Creamery brand is giving co-op members like the Luehmans the opportunity to connect with consumers.

continued from page 9

products at its foodservice distribution warehouses in 60 U.S. cities.

"This brand launch will be a thoughtful, steady process to make sure we do it right," Reece said. "We recognize we only have one shot to make a good first impression with consumers."

AMPI members are encouraged to reach out to managers of local grocery

stores and restaurants and encourage them to sell and serve Dinner Bell butter and cheese. Resources to assist with spreading the word about the brand members own can be downloaded from the members-only side of www.ampi.com. DD

*{ Contributing writer
Donna F. Abernathy }*

Sharing wisdom from the farm

"Take time to watch the sunrise."

Inspired by the view from their Minnesota farm, the Luehmann family shared this bit of advice when AMPI members were invited to send in their favorite words of wisdom gleaned from life on the farm. The Luehmans were among more than 30 members who responded with 130 different farmhouse rules.

"This rule is meant to remind us all to take the time to look around and enjoy life," said Katie Luehmann. "If not, we'll miss seeing the beauty of God's creation all around us."

The insights received were whittled down to a select 15 to grace the first sticks of Dinner Bell Creamery butter. Each butter stick is wrapped in sayings supplied by members, providing another link between consumers and the dairy farmers who produce their food.

Have a Farmhouse Rule to share? Visit the members-only side of www.ampi.com to submit yours. There is no deadline, so share your idea any time inspiration — like a beautiful sunrise — strikes.

Brand Briefs

- Launched in June 2019.
- Butter quarters are the first AMPI product to bear the new brand.
- Wrapped with new ButterLock wrap to keep flavors in and odors out.
- Positioned as a mid-price brand, falling between higher-priced national brands and lower-priced private label products.
- Visit www.dinnerbellcreamery.coop and follow the brand on Facebook and Instagram.

