

WSU PUYALLUP HIGHLIGHT

April 26, 2005

Processing for Profit: Small Farms Team Organizes Conference for Food Entrepreneurs

No one says it's easy. But agricultural producers who have created value-added food businesses seem to relish doing whatever it takes to be successful anyway.

In early April, dozens of these successful food and farm entrepreneurs came to Auburn to share their insights at a conference organized by WSU's Small Farms Team and funded by the US Department of Agriculture. Nearly 300 farmers and agricultural professionals attended the two-day event at Green River Community College, some from as far away as Ohio and California.

Sessions featured panel discussions with farmers and ranchers, state regulators, food processors, and university specialists. Together they addressed infrastructural, processing and regulatory barriers faced by new food businesses. Topics included meat and poultry processing, specialty milk and cheese sales, wine- and cider-making, and value-added fruit and vegetable products.

Special sessions addressed food safety, business financing, risk management, processing technologies, and product labeling and marketing. The menu for the conference was a showcase of Northwest bounty and included some of the finest wines and cheeses available anywhere in the world.

"I really went out of my way to go" to the New Food Entrepreneur Conference, said cherry farmer Bill Razey of Naches, who is contemplating a value-added enterprise using dried cherries or a wine. "It was worth it," Razey said. "It had that magic to it."

Read more on the New Food Entrepreneur Conference at:
www.smallfarms.wsu.edu.

Photo at right:

A bevy of Northwest value-added products at his feet, renowned market researcher Harvey Hartman told conference participants, "You are the real deal." In his keynote speech, Hartman said authenticity is a strength when bringing a new product to market, and he encouraged producers to tell their stories because more consumers are looking for a personal connection with farmers and ranchers. Learn more about Hartman's firm at www.hartman-group.com.



Highlight by Rich Hines

Weekly Highlights provided by the people and programs of WSU Puyallup. To include a highlight in an upcoming announcement, please contact either Heather Schriver, hschriver@wsu.edu, 253-445-4504, or Jon Newkirk, jnewkirk@wsu.edu, 253-445-4568

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