

# Farm-Based Businesses Help Boost Incomes

## Farmer-Brewed Wheat Beer Adds Value To Crop

Say you're a wheat farmer and you're looking to add value to your crop. What comes to mind?

"Beer" is the answer we got from Tom Schafer, Marlin, Washington.

"I'd always thought we could make a good beer out of wheat," he says.

Schafer, who represents the fourth generation on his family farm, grows about 5,000 acres of wheat and other small grains, with help from his sons Kolby and Zach.

When his doctor told him to slow down because of chronic back problems or look forward to spending the rest of his days in a wheel chair, Schafer figured a microbrewery would give him something to do while turning the hard work over to the younger generation.

"It not as physically exhausting, but between the farm and the brewery, I'm spending as many hours or more at work," he says.

Schafer put together a business plan and coaxed a couple of experienced brew masters to work for him part-time.

He put up a building in nearby Odessa, where, he says, he has room to expand if he needs to. He located used brewing equipment that he and family members hauled to Odessa in the farm truck.

Schafer says getting everything in order, including all the necessary state and federal licenses and permits, was a three-year process.

Once the brewery was up and running, he called on his two brew-masters to help

him create some distinctive beverages. The first keg went out the door in June 2002.

"We started with four different beers. We dropped one of those and added two more, so now we have five," he says.

All are wheat beers, heavy on the grain and light on the hops, although they vary in taste and color.

Schafer uses both barley and wheat in his beers, but so far, he hasn't used any of his own grain. "We buy 55-lb. bags of malted barley and wheat from companies that provide them to breweries. Maltng grains to make beer is a labor intensive, long, precise process, and we don't want to get involved in that," he says. "We are trying to negotiate a contract to produce white wheat for one of the malting companies. Then we could assume that we'd be using some of our wheat," he says.

Schafer says after just one year of operation, the brewery is breaking even. "It's doing better than we anticipated," he says.

Rather than competing with canned and bottled beers, Schafer decided to make his beers available only in bulk. He sells kegs for the bar and restaurant trade, self-marketing them in the eastern part of Washington and into Oregon. A distributor handles sales in the central part of the state. "We haven't pushed too hard to get into the Seattle area. The competition is pretty stiff there, and we need to concentrate first on meeting the demand in eastern and central Washington," he says.

Schafer spends much of his time calling



Tom Schafer added value to his wheat crop by setting up his own microbrewery.

on bar and restaurant owners. "I want to get to know them and find out what they like or dislike about my products," he says. "I want them to associate me with my products. I don't want Rocky Coulee beers to be just another beer on the wall."

In and around the Odessa area, local customers can buy Rocky Coulee products in pigns, which are pressurized 2 1/4-gal. dark brown plastic jugs designed to fit neatly on a refrigerator shelf.

"The brewery is open one day a week to the public. Our customers know that from 2

to 8 p.m. on Fridays, we'll be there to refill pigns," Schafer says. So far, pigns are available only direct from the brewery.

He says the entire endeavor has been a family affair, involving his wife, Lynette, their sons Kolby and Zach, and daughter, Kelly. Also involved have been Kolby's wife Kelly and daughter Kelly's husband, Larry Weber.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tom Schafer, 17477 Road South NE, Marlin, Wash. 98832 (ph 509 345-2216; email farmsinc@televar.com).

## Farmers Turn Fields Into Fairways

With crop prices near all-time lows, you might be tempted some days to do what Raleigh and Pam Dunston did. They plowed their crops under and turned their fields into fairways.

Raleigh World golf course opened to the public in June, with the last of its 18 greens still being completed. They're planning a grand opening celebration later in July.

Raleigh World is not your typical perfectly maintained, heavily groomed country club-type course. In fact, the fairways and greens still resemble the pasture and hay fields the Dunstons carved it from over the past six years.

Built on an Iowa Century Farm near Lucas, Iowa, Raleigh World was originally designed just for family and friends. But they had so much fun on the first few holes they built, the Dunstons decided to go public.

Dunston says the course wasn't built to give golfers the same experience they'd get on a country club course. The barn his great grandfather built more than a hundred years ago now serves as a clubhouse. The course makes use of the fields, woods, and ravines pretty much as they were. A little earthwork was done, but only where it was absolutely necessary. Greens are mostly warm season grasses, like bluegrass, orchard grass, bromegrass and fescue. Fairways were simply carved out of the grass and other vegetation that was already growing there. Roughs are the same thing, but unmowed. Pam's favorite tree stands in the middle of one fairway and it's out of bounds. "There's a three-stroke penalty for hitting it," Raleigh jokes.

Cart rental is available. And the club-

house serves beer, soft drinks, and snacks.

In Norwich, Ontario, brothers Wayne and Aubrey Bertrand also built a golf course on what was once unusable land around their farmhouse.

The Bertrand brothers like to keep their 7-hole course looking as good as a country club so they spend more time mowing than they do playing. But, they say, even that is a welcome break from their dairy farm.

Don Lobb, a retired farmer near Caledon, Ontario, took a look at seven acres of his own property and envisioned his own golf course. It has nine tees scattered around the perimeter of a dog-leg shaped field, with three strategically located greens, a small pond water hazard and several sand and grass bunkers. Using the different tees to shoot at the various greens, he can play at least 18 different holes.

Lobb has less time than he'd like to play on his own golf course, but he has neighbors who enjoy it and even help with the mowing and maintenance in return for playing time.

All three of these courses can be described as "pasture golf" courses, a "back to the basics" or no-frills form of golf that seems to be catching on all over North America. There's even an unofficial Pasture Golf Association ([www.pasturegolf.com](http://www.pasturegolf.com)) where you'll find the Dunston course listed.

Dunston, Lobb and the Bertrand brothers have found even a small golf course takes large amounts of capital to establish and maintain. The Bertrands say they've sunk thousands into turf, trees and shrubs.

Dunston says his pasture golf course cost about as much to build as the land was worth. He says besides his family heritage, scenic beauty was about all the farm had going for



At Raleigh World golf course, above, the farm's old barn now serves as the clubhouse. Fairways were simply carved out of the grass and other vegetation that was already growing there.

it. He's counting on that and the unusual experience of playing Raleigh World to recoup his investment and make the farm profitable again.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Raleigh Dunston, 11859 550th St., Lucas, Iowa 50151 (ph 641 766-6158); Don Lobb, 1009 Boston Mills Rd., Terra Cotta, Ontario, Canada L0P 1N0 (ph 905 838-2221; email: [lammorris@atcanada.ca](mailto:lammorris@atcanada.ca)); or Aubrey Bertrand, RR 3, Norwich, Ontario, Canada N0J 1P0 (ph 519 424-9496).

Don Lobb made a "9-hole" golf course, right, by setting up 9 tees and 3 greens.

