



**Maartje Murphy** has created more than 100 different flavors of gelato, which she sells at farmers markets and other events.

### She Sells Gelato From Family Dairy

Maartje Murphy is on a mission to introduce hand-crafted, locally-made gelato to North Dakota consumers. Within a couple of years, she's managed to hook customers in every direction from the Carrington, N.Dak., farm where she makes the Italian ice cream. With her Duchessa Gelato carts, she attracts customers at farmers markets and delights wedding guests with the unexpected treat.

The gelato and her parents and brothers' 1,500-cow dairy are unique in the east central part of North Dakota. Murphy's parents owned a dairy in the Netherlands before emigrating to Canada in 2001, and then North Dakota in 2008. Most of the milk is sold to a creamery in Fargo, but after taking a week-long gelato-making workshop with her mother, Murphy began using some of the milk to pursue her dream of running her own business, and make a product she loved in her native country.

Starting with fresh milk from her family's

dairy, she pasteurizes the milk and makes the base to cool overnight before adding flavors the next day and churning the gelato for about 10 minutes.

"I've created over 100 different flavors," Murphy says.

Initially she took her gelato cart to farmers markets and other events, serving gelato from elegant stainless steel tubs, scooping the treat into cones or cups. After posting photos on social media of the gelato cart at her own wedding, she got requests and started catering to weddings, graduations, and other family and business events.

Pints sell for \$12/each or five for \$50. She also sells Gelato cakes (layers of frozen gelato between Graham cracker crust) for \$60.

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### They Find New Uses For Old Barn Wood

"We are passionate about preserving Saskatchewan's rich farming history by reclaiming wood from old barns and then cleaning, drying and distributing the wood for all types of home-building and renovation projects," says Tyler Slowski, founder of Prairie Barn Brothers (PBB) of Yorkton, Saskatchewan.

Since its founding in 2018, PBB reclaimed barn wood has been used for rustic doors, building exteriors, fireplace mantles, tabletops and kitchen cabinets. Exposed beams are very popular in new construction, he says. The company has deconstructed barns, grain elevators and other buildings from Manitoba to Vancouver, and markets the reclaimed wood to builders and resellers in Canada and the U.S.

Slowski says there is no shortage of old barns on the prairie. He has to turn down more than 90 percent of barns that have been offered. Before taking on a job, he considers the location of the barn, assesses the quality of the wood, studies the structure for safety concerns during deconstruction, and considers prospective buyers for the reclaimed wood.

His current project is a 40,000 sq. ft. Commonwealth airplane hanger in Yorkton, Sask., built during World War II. The structure was built with 3, 4, 6, 8 and 12-in. thick timbers to help it withstand shelling and bombing in case the war came to that area. Most prairie-province barns, hangers and other buildings built during the 1940's were constructed of Douglas fir from British Columbia. The lumber was shipped by



**Prairie Barn Brothers** in Saskatchewan used reclaimed barn wood to make this attractive sliding door.

rail east across Canada. Western cedar and spruce were also used in some prairie barns.

"We're probably averaging one or more calls a week now from somebody offering us a barn," he says.

One of the reasons Slowski enjoys the business is preservation. "We're able to take something that's 100 years old and recreate something beautiful that will last for another 100 years," Slowski says.

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Photo by Tippy Jordan

**Gathered Oaks**, a wedding and event venue, converted these 18-ft. dia. bins to hotel-style lodging. There are 2 levels in most bins, with private baths and modern accommodations.

### Farm-Based "Hotel" Built From Grain Bins

Converting grain bins into hotel-style lodging is a perfect complement to Gathered Oaks, a wedding and event venue featuring a barn and 11 rural acres overlooking a lake. When not in use by wedding guests, Airbnb and other guests can book the grain bin rooms.

Anne Larson, owner of the Alexandria, Minn., business explains that her son saw an article about converted grain bins "and we decided to go for it because it's just so cool. We found a good builder willing to do it."

The 18-ft. dia. bins came from her aunt's property. They were disassembled, transported, reassembled and grouped together. With two levels in each bin, there are eight units with private baths and modern accommodations. One bin is slightly taller with a third story to create a suite on the top floors.

The builder cut angles to create 13 sides to accommodate the round walls, and the top floor rooms have dome ceilings. The biggest challenge was installing utilities such as water and septic. Getting Wi-Fi was also tricky because of the metal walls.

The effort was worth it, Larson says. Wedding guests can stay in the grain bin rooms as well as the farm house.

Besides the lake, the property is surrounded by farms and next to a winery and other attractions in the lakes area of Alexandria that is 10 minutes away.

To book, check out the Gathered Oaks website or go through Airbnb.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gathered Oaks, 4550 County Road 34 NW, Alexandria, Minn. 56308 (ph 701 361-8721; [www.gatheredoaks.com](http://www.gatheredoaks.com); [reservations@gatheredoaks.com](mailto:reservations@gatheredoaks.com)).



Back in 1910, Shaw Farm Dairy delivered milk in a horse-drawn wagon. These days, a colorful refrigerated van makes deliveries to customers in their service area.

### Family Farm Dairy Business Booming

During a time when small to medium-size dairies are caught in a hard place between lower milk prices, higher-priced equipment and land, and a dwindling labor base, Shaw Farm Dairy in Dracut, Mass. has found a solid niche. Warren Shaw says the pandemic has increased their dairy and food home delivery business 200 percent since March, 2020 and he doesn't see it dropping off anytime soon.

Shaw notes that when the pandemic first hit, people stayed home and welcomed a reliable source of milk, meat and dairy products, delivered to their homes. Pre-pandemic their farm handled deliveries with one van, but the uptick in demand since March required a second van, and he's already looking for another one.

Shaw's vehicles deliver milk, ice cream and meat once a week to customers in 15 villages near the dairy, which is about 40 minutes northwest of Boston. Milk from the

100-cow Shaw Farm herd is processed at their own plant. About half of it is sold in glass bottles, which are re-used, and some of their milk is certified organic. Customers order online, pay by credit card.

"We've always raised excellent cattle, grown our own feed, taken great care of the land and provided an excellent environment for our herd so they produce well," Shaw says. The Shaw operation owns about 160 acres, rents small parcels nearby, and is financially self-sufficient.

While other operations have closed or sold to developers, Shaw sees their farm as a permanent fixture in the community. Visitors are welcome to tour the barn and bottling facilities during special events.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Shaw Farm Dairy, 204 New Boston Road, Dracut, Mass. 01826 (ph 978 957-0031; [www.shawfarm.com](http://www.shawfarm.com)).