# Training Academy Specializes In Malting

The Malt Academy of Winnipeg, Canada, is a unique training institute with programming dedicated to malting barley. Malting is soaking barley in water to trigger germination and prepare its starches for conversion into fermentable sugars. This seemingly simple process is deceptively tricky to master.

"The Malt Academy was established in 2013," says Managing Director Peter Watts. "The growth in the craft brewing sector in North America spawned a craft malting sector with some of the first operations opening in the U.S. around 2012. One of those was River Bend Malting in North Carolina. The owners contacted the CMBTC to see about training, and two months later, the first Malt Academy was held in Winnipeg."

Both 1-week and 3-day courses are offered. The 1-week course is an intensive deep dive into theoretical and practical, hands-on instruction for malt processing. Students utilize the CMBTC's state-of-the-art 75-kg pilot malthouse and Joe White micro-malting unit. "Our primary target audience ranges from staff working with malting companies, including malt plant operators, management, and procurement and sales staff," says Watts. "In addition, the courses cater to a broad range of people working directly or peripherally related to malting operations from brewers to grain company staff that source and market malting barley to malting companies."

All Malt Academy instructors have significant practical malting and brewing experience, and the small class sizes allow students to receive hands-on training. The courses focus on practical knowledge of malting technology, manufacturing processes, and the minute details affecting malt quality and overall brewing performance. Says Watts, "Our courses are a blend of theory delivered through lectures and hands-on training in the CMBTC's pilot malt plant. Participants have the opportunity to work with malting barley to understand how to do barley quality evaluation, malt processing, final malt analysis, and preparation for brewing. The students gain an understanding of how to optimize the quality of finished malt for the brewing process."

The 3-day program focuses on the Canadian malting barley value chain. It dives deeper into breeding and varietal development as well as production, handling, malt processing, and brewing. Students gain an understanding of malting barley selection criteria, quality evaluation, malt analysis, specialty malts and brewing, and a better sense of global barley and brewing statistics. The course includes lectures, round-table discussions, guest lectures from representatives from the malting industry, hands-on instruction in the CMBTC malt plant, and hard copies of the lecture materials. It's best suited to those who want a high-level understanding of the malting and brewing process and the Canadian malting barley value chain. Barley producers will also benefit from learning where everything in the industry stands.

The 1-week course is $2,100, and the 3-day course is $1,050. There's one remaining 1-week course for 2024: December 2-6.


**Courses cover hands-on instruction in malt processing and offer in-person and remote training.**

Remote courses are also possible.

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# He Presses His Own Sunflower Oil

Pressing his own sunflower oil is the latest accomplishment for Michael Cohen, who describes himself as an experimental gardener. He tried growing and pressing Peredovik oilseed sunflowers a few years ago, but they were too hard to press using his hand-crank spiral press. His latest attempt yielded one pint of oil from 6 quarts of hulled culinary or "snack" sunflower seeds. That was enough to meet his goal of making crackers from foods he grew—wheat, sesame seeds, and sunflower oil. This year, he hopes to grow enough sunflowers to make a gallon of oil.

The key to success is growing a large seed variety, two pieces of equipment, and taking the steps needed to create a clean product. He described the process in a recent issue of Small Farmers Journal.

Living in Zone 5 at the northern tip of New York state's Hudson Valley, Cohen is looking for a sunflower variety that has a shorter season and yields big seeds. Along with Mammoth, which he grew in 2023, he planted Mongolian and a couple of other snack sunflower varieties this year.

"The most challenging part of the process is harvesting and drying the sunflower heads. Birds start eating sunflower seeds just before they are ready. Also, we had a wet and cool fall last year, and mold was a problem, too," Cohen says.

He plans to harvest the flower heads before they fully mature and cut the backs off to speed up drying on racks with a fan.

Once dried and threshed off the flower heads, he runs the seeds through a hand-crank Corona mill he purchased earlier for other grains. He sets the distance between the plates so they split the sunflower kernels without crushing them.

"I ended up putting the seeds through twice, with the plates a little closer to get the uncracked seeds," he adds.

After running them through 1/4-in. and then 1/8-in. screens, the kernels with bits of shells go through a homemade vacuum seed cleaner he built from plans he found at www.realseeds.co.uk/seedcleaner.html.

With the suction from a vacuum cleaner to create an updraft, the cleaner does a pretty good job of separating kernels from shells. But there were still some bits of shell, and Cohen wanted only kernels to press.

"Floatation really works well," he says, noting that when covered with water, the kernels sink, and shells and whole seeds float to the top. They can be easily poured off, and the process repeated a couple of times until only seeds are left.

After letting them dry completely, the seeds are ready to go through a press. Cohen purchased a hand-crank Piteba spiral press for less than $200.

**Hand-crank Piteba oil press in action.**

Besides the oil, he ended up with a lot of oil cake, which can be used for animal feed as it's high in protein.

"If there are no shells in it, it could be used for food, such as crackers," Cohen notes.

He's eager to improve the process this year and hopes to press oil from Styrian pumpkin seeds and possibly grape seeds from a local winery. He also wants to experiment with black walnuts and hickory nuts, cracking them with a hammer and using floatation to (hopefully) yield clean nutmeats for pressing.

"I'm trying to adapt old-fashioned methods for the present," he says.

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**Though uncommon in South Dakota, Tvedt's found yak surprisingly easy to raise. They don't eat much, just 8 lbs. of feed per day, and have minimal protein requirements.**

# Ranch Specializes In Yak Meat

Dave Tvedt of Volga, S.D., has been in the yak business for 15 years. He maintains a herd of around 75 animals year-round at Pink Flamingo Yak Ranch.

The property's name is a point of pride. "There are so many earthy names for farms out there, and I wanted to stand out," Tvedt laughs. "And no, we don't have a lot of flamingos in South Dakota. Maybe there's some in a zoo."

Tvedt credits his neighbor with piquing his interest in yaks. "My neighbor is a bit of an animal trader and had yaks that he was passing along. I was very curious about them and was drawn to get my own. At the time, my mother was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's, so they were a good distraction."

Yak are related to cattle and originated in central Asia. Domestic yaks differ from their wild counterparts through a smaller stature and a higher tolerance for low elevations. In Tibet, they're used for meat, milk, transportation, and even for their hair. But at Pink Flamingo Yak Ranch, the animals are used primarily for companionship and meat production.

Though his neighbor didn't stick with yaks, Tvedt has steadily grown his herd each year. "They're a really decent animal. They like to be kept as pets; many individuals like attention, and each has its own personality." He believes they're naturally good-tempered animals, so long as they get human interaction early on. "Some calves are curious and like to be petted."

Though uncommon in South Dakota, Tvedt's found yak surprisingly easy to raise. They don't eat much, just 8 lbs. of feed per day, and have minimal protein requirements. And since they aren't heavy, they don't make big pot marks in muddy conditions as cattle do. Copper deficiency can be a problem, so Tvedt suggests seeking food sources containing some. He's had good luck with brome grass. They also require minimal fencing and don't attempt to jump over it.

Though Tvedt prefers the herd to calve in the spring, bulls have year-round access to the herd and tend to work on their own timeframe. That can pose a problem when insects swarm in the summer, as too many flies can bring down a young calf.

Yaks take about 8 years to mature fully, but most are butchered around 3 to 4 years old. Tvedt sells primarily to a local restaurant, which added yak burgers to its menu in 2022. Others are processed locally, and customers contact Tvedt directly to arrange for orders. Many compare yak meat to sweet beef or elk. The meat tends to be very red with minimal fat content, and it's known for high levels of heart-healthy Omega 6 fatty acids.

For those interested in raising yak, Tvedt suggests starting slow with a few animals at a time. "Yak could work really well if you like farmer's markets. Just know that growing them is a slow process—you have to wait 3 years for them to get to size."

Readers can contact Dave by phone to discuss orders. "If people want to come and visit the herd in person, I'm open to that, too."

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