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Rapsons looking forward to sharing their farm-crafted yogurt at local food festival Nov. 2.

HAWKEYE, IA - The Dave and Carolee Rapson family has been crafting quality yogurt in their on-farm processing plant for three years and they are looking forward to sharing their products at an upcoming local food festival.

The Rapsons wanted to add value to their milk. It took about two years of research and learning about yogurt making before they officially started County View Yogurt. They toured other farms around the country with on-farm processing facilities, and Carolee initially experimented by making yogurt in her kitchen for her family.

They currently make yogurt four days a week on their farm, located between West Union and Hawkeye. They are using about 7,000 pounds of milk weekly; they will consider their processing facility at capacity when they are processing five days a week. Their 120 Holsteins produce about 65,000 pounds of milk a week and remaining milk is shipped through Wapsie Valley Creamery to be made into bulk cheese.

County View yogurt only contains non-Homogenized Grade A pasteurized milk, nonfat dried milk, pure cane sugar, natural flavor and natural color, and includes live and active cultures with probiotics. They use no stabilizers, gelatins or preservatives in their yogurt, and the cows kept for yogurt production are not given hormones.

The Holsteins are housed in a large free-stall barn with sand bedding and on processing days. Timing and temperature play key roles as they make the milk into yogurt, which is ready for consumers within 24 hours.

Yogurt making involves getting the milk to the correct milkfat, heating it to the proper temperature for the active cultures, filling the plastic cups with hot liquid product and then letting it incubate and thicken for six hours. Timing and temperature play key roles.

In addition to the actual yogurt-making process they package and deliver their own products. They hired a full-time marketing person a year and half ago. Since then have been adding small local distributors to help them market and distribute their product to 80 stores, eight colleges, 14 public schools, four hospitals and several restaurants in eight states in the Upper Midwest.

County View Dairy offers a variety of sizes and flavors of their yogurt products, including a new Custard Greek smooth flavor line. Their flavors include vanilla, plain, blueberry, black cherry, strawberry, peach and raspberry, and the Greek line features “fruit on the bottom” They sell their products in a variety of sizes, ranges from 6 ounces to five pounds.

They have doubled their business over the last year and still have plenty of capacity to keep growing. “We are looking at working with more large institutions, distributors as well as doing some co-packing and private label work for other companies,” says Bob Howard, Director of marketing and sales. They are also looking to develop the market more within the region as well.

You’ll have a unique opportunity to sample County View Dairy’s products at the *Feast! Festival & Tradeshow* in Rochester, MN on Sunday, Nov. 2.

The *Feast! Festival* is your prime stop to satisfy your curiosity about local foods. Visitors will be able to taste and purchase a variety of foods that are locally made throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa. Meet the farmers and artisans and hear the stories behind their foods. Admission to the festival is \$5 for adults and \$2 for children. There is an additional charge for beer and wine tasting.

Howard notes the folks from Country View Dairy are looking forward to making new connections with customers, chefs, distributors and local foods supporters at *Feast!*

Following the *Festival*, the *Tradeshow* on Nov. 3 will offer an exclusive experience for exhibitors to network with buyers.

For more information about the *Feast! Festival & Tradeshow*, please visit www.local-feast.org. To keep in touch with the latest updates, like *Feast! Local Food Network* on Facebook, follow @Local_Feast on Twitter and use #localFEAST to make sure your voice is heard.

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