



# AK Agriculture Insider

November/December, 2018

## \$5 Challenge Winner

Find out which retail store went above and beyond promoting Alaska Grown in the second annual \$5 Alaska Grown Challenge.

## From the Director

The latest on the Agriculture industry in Alaska from Division Director Arthur Keyes.

## Recipe

This Barley Beef Soup adapted from the Alaska Flour Company will warm up your winter!

## Meet the Team

Get to know Curtis Knight, our Development Specialist in our Fairbanks office.

## New Producer Directory

Check out our new farmer, producer and Alaska Grown member directory available on the Alaska Grown app on your mobile device.

## Fiber Processing

Learn about a Fairbanks mill that processes fibers from qiviut and cashmere, to dog and cat hair.

## Specialty Crop Grants

Find out about what projects have been awarded specialty crop funding throughout the state of Alaska.

# From the Director

Hello,  
I hope your holiday season is off to a wonderful start and your Thanksgiving meal was an Alaska Grown feast! There were many great agricultural events and conferences in November, and it was good to connect and catch up with many of our producers throughout the state. The SARE Conference featured excellent presentations on a variety of topics from honey bee production to aquaculture to livestock development and agritourism. It is always refreshing and inspiring to see how our farmers are creating solutions and overcoming the challenges of agriculture in Alaska.

The Annual Alaska Farm Bureau meeting was a great success. It was wonderful to hear from Governor Elect Mike Dunleavy at the reception, and his pledge of support for Agriculture in Alaska. State Representative Geran Tarr was also recognized by the Farm Bureau as the Legislator of the Year for her tremendous work to help the industry. I would also like to thank Gov. Bill Walker for his participation and the legislation to help grow, raise awareness and develop Agriculture in Alaska. Over the next few months the Division will be working on plans and opportunities for marketing, education, and support. We would love to hear your ideas and insight on how the Division can best serve Alaskans and agriculture, so please get in touch with us.

Until next time,  
Arthur Keyes - Director of Agriculture



Alaska Rep. Geran Tarr recognized as "Legislator of the Year" by the Alaska Farm Bureau.

# Alaska Grown App

The Division of Agriculture has added an Alaska Grown member directory to its app. The Alaska Grown app can be downloaded for free on the Android and Apple store. The Alaska Grown Producer Directory provides information about farmers, livestock raisers, nurseries, value-added producers, and business associates that provide Alaska Grown products. App users of the directory can find local producers specifically in their area or browse the directory in its entirety. The Alaska Grown restaurant directory is also still available in the app, where you can find restaurants statewide that use Alaska Grown ingredients in their dishes.



# Give the Gift

The Division will be launching its "Give the Gift of Alaska Grown" campaign on Social Media in December. Posts will feature unique Alaska Grown products that Alaskans can purchase this holiday season. From Alaska Grown baby food, to meat packs and flower subscriptions, the campaign will highlight as many Alaska Grown products including Havemeister Milk and Alaska Flour Co. cookie mix for Santa's Christmas Eve treats.



Have an Alaska Grown holiday product or service you would like us to feature? Send an email and photos to [jennifer.castro@alaska.gov](mailto:jennifer.castro@alaska.gov)

## \$5 Challenge Winner

The Division of Agriculture has announced the winning store of the second annual Alaska Grown \$5 Retail Challenge, Walmart of Wasilla. The store made an exceptional effort to feature Alaska Grown products by creating specialty displays, and by consistently labeling and promoting the Alaska Grown products they carry during the June to October campaign. “Throughout the challenge, you could walk into this Walmart location and know exactly where to find Alaska Grown products with their specialty Alaska Grown displays, banners, and labels, ultimately helping Alaskans to choose local,” Keyes said.



The Walmart store in Wasilla created specialty displays for Alaska Grown products.

The \$5 Alaska Grown Challenge, in its second year, encouraged Alaskans to spend \$5 weekly on Alaska Grown products at their local retailers including vegetables, dairy, meat, and grains for five months when most products are available and in season. Participating retailers of the challenge included Carrs Safeway, Walmart, Fred Meyer, Three Bears, and Alaska Commercial Co.

Division of Agriculture Director Arthur Keyes will present the “Golden Carrot” award to Wasilla Walmart as the retail winner of the challenge. The Fred Meyer Dimond store in Anchorage received an honorable mention for its marketing efforts during the challenge. Additionally new Alaska Grown products were added to retailers this year including Bambinos Baby Food at Carrs Safeway stores and Alaska Grown peonies at Fred Meyer stores.

## Specialty Crop Grantees

We are pleased to announce our Specialty Crop Block Grant recipients for the 2018 funding cycle. The grant funds are provided by the USDA, AMS to enhance the competitiveness of Alaska’s specialty crops including fruits, vegetables, horticulture, and nursery crops. These funds are awarded through a competitive review process guided by industry, nonprofit, and government stakeholders. The following applicants have been selected to receive specialty crop grants for their projects (summarized below):

- Alaska Peony Growers Association: Optimizing post-harvest botrytis control and handling of fresh cut peonies.
- Homer Soil and Water Conservation District: A high tunnel network in Homer, AK.
- Oceanside Farms: Inspiring Alaskan growers with a means of efficiently pressing fresh Alaskan Grown rhubarb into juice.
- Rootseller Farm: Growth, production, and preliminary market preferences for unique and flavorful rhubarb cultivators.
- Twitter Creek Gardens: Increasing crop production efficiency and yields with innovative technology.

The Division would like to encourage agricultural stakeholders throughout the state to send us your funding priorities for specialty crop projects that we will consider adding to our SCBG funding announcement opportunity next year. We would also like to request volunteers for the grant review process. We are encouraged to look for producers to include on our panel of review members as this always gives us a unique perspective on each project submitted. Please contact Johanna Herron at [johanna.herron@alaska.gov](mailto:johanna.herron@alaska.gov) for project priorities or panel review recommendations.

# Processing Fiber

A fiber mill in Fairbanks is making it easier for producers to get yarn and fibers processed without having to ship their product out of state. The Coyote Trail Farm and Fiber Mill opened its doors January 1, 2017. The mill processes a wide variety of fibers from qiviut and cashmere to dog and cat hair. While the mill hasn't processed any hemp, they are ready and eager when the time arrives.



The fiber processing mill set up in Fairbanks. Coyote Trail Farm and Fiber Mill, a family run business, is owned by Kate Wattum. Wattum's spouse, children, sister and parents were all involved in developing the mill and continue to be involved. Kate's family started raising a small flock of sheep about 10 years ago and from there explored fiber processing on a small scale, mostly sending her fiber to a mill out of state. A few years ago, she read a report that mentioned there was enough business in the state to support a small fiber mill. From there a lot of time and planning went in to making a dream become reality.



Blended fibers that have been processed at the mill.

The facility itself was finished just four days prior to the delivery of the mill in October of 2016. The actual mill itself is a Canadian made Belfast Mini Mill. A trainer from Belfast Mills arrived in Fairbanks with the machines to do the install and an initial intensive training.



The mill can process a variety of hairs from Reindeer to sheep, even cat and dog hair.

Wattum says the challenges with the operation are very similar to those faced by anyone opening a small business. Her biggest challenge is getting sheep farmers to consider the fiber on the animals as potential income and be willing to get it sheared and sent to her mill. She also says operation costs are important considerations of business development; everything from electric to payroll to postage and sales, it's all a learning curve, one they are meeting one hurdle at a time. For now, the mill is establishing relationships with fiber harvesters, which Wattum says will be key to the success of the mill.



In the meantime, she wants everyone to know: "I'm here, the doors are open and I'm excited to see what people have in their barns." For more information on Coyote Trail Farm and Fiber Mill visit:

<https://www.coyotetrailfarmandfibermill.com/>

## Meet the Team

Curtis Knight began working for the Alaska Division of Agriculture in 2006 in the Northern Region Office located in Fairbanks, Alaska. In 2016, Curtis became a Development Specialist working on agriculture inspection, regulatory and phytosanitary export programs. Prior to joining the Division of Agriculture, Curtis worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Biological Science Technician, and graduated from the University of Alaska



Fairbanks with a bachelor's degree. Like many residents, Curtis's original move to Alaska was unplanned; after visiting he fell in love with the state and the natural beauty.

Curtis enjoys working on a variety of programs for the Division of Agriculture and serving the agricultural community in the Interior. His favorite Alaska Grown item is a fresh salad mix, and he also enjoys pickled cucumbers and carrots during the winter. Curtis loves to spend his free time outdoors camping,



fishing, hiking, snowmachining, and riding his motorcycle. He also loves music and is a drummer. Him and his wife both enjoy gardening, but Curtis admits that she is the one with the green thumb. They plan to build a green house and garden area next summer. If you are located in the Interior/Fairbanks area and have questions about agriculture, you can reach Curtis by phone at 907-374-3716 or email [Curtis.knight@alaska.gov](mailto:Curtis.knight@alaska.gov)

## Recipe

Alaska Grown Beef Barley Soup  
(adapted from the Alaska Flour Company)

### Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked whole hulless barley from the Alaska Flour Co.
- 2 cups diced Alaska Grown potatoes
- 2 cups diced Alaska Grown carrots
- 3/4 cup diced Alaska Grown onion
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped asparagus
- 2 cups chunked cabbage
- 1 lb. Alaska Grown hamburger, (cooked drained)
- 1/2 tsp. liquid smoke
- 1 Tbs. instant bouillon granules

### Directions

- 1) Cook the barley in your rice cooker (6 cups water to 2 cups whole hulless barley). Stir in one envelope of Lipton onion dry soup mix. NOTE: If you don't have a rice cooker, then bring 6 cups of water to a rolling boil, add the Lipton soup mix or 3 beef bouillon cubes and 2 cups whole hulless barley. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 50 to 60 minutes or until barley is tender and nearly all the liquid is absorbed. Stir often during the cooking process.
- 2) Boil carrots, potatoes, celery, asparagus, and cabbage until tender. Set aside.
- 3) Sauté the onion and the hamburger until onions are tender and transparent and hamburger is cooked through.
- 4) When the barley is done, mix all cooked ingredients together. Add water if necessary to desired consistency. Add the liquid smoke. If more beef flavor is needed, add more beef bouillon granules.

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