

## **Cooking up new businesses** **Farm Market Kitchen satellite kitchen located at NWTC**

*By Pamela Parks • March 25, 2009*



Margie Stats and Deb Stats, co-owners of Country View Farms with their husbands, bake some Maple Caramel Korn at the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College kitchen. Country View Farms is one of the food processing businesses that uses the satellite kitchen of the Farm Market Kitchen Incubator project in Algoma. Pamela Parks photo

The Northeast Wisconsin Technical College Sturgeon Bay campus' kitchen has been cooking up classes and community meals and — within the last year — some new businesses as well.

Collaborating with the Farm Market Kitchen Incubator in Algoma, three local food processors have used NWTC's kitchen to develop and create products. Within the next few weeks, the number of processors using the satellite kitchen may double.

"When someone is processing food products, they have to become a licensed food processing plant just like any of the big food processing plant in Wisconsin or in the United States," explained Farm Market Kitchen Incubator director Mary Pat Carlson. A food processor needs a kitchen up to Wisconsin health codes. Renting kitchen time is cost effective and less of a financial risk for new business owners than building their own kitchen. The incubator also provides assistance with business planning and marketing.

Unlike typical incubators that target manufacturing or art, the Farm Market Kitchen Incubator is a jumping off point for food-related businesses in the region and around the state. "This is such a unique project that people travel from the Milwaukee, Platteville, Madison and Appleton. They travel this far to get help. We have a full house right now." Fifty-five processors use the site, including eleven from Door County.

The incubator has companies processing everything from soup to nuts to catered goods, according to Carlson. The list includes sauces and dips, cheesecakes, chocolates, jams and jellies, maple syrup products, dry baking mixes, salsas and marinara sauces — just to name a few.

Three processors use the NWTC satellite kitchen: Penny Lane Farms, producing Asian dipping sauces; Country View Farms, producing maple syrup products like caramel corn, dried mixes and granola; and Creative Enterprises, producing cakes under Crazy Cakes and cheesecakes and cookies under Yummy Goodness. Four additional processors are considering the site as well.

"We are really excited about this because it will really open the door for some people and a specialty food business in Door County is such a perfect fit," said Carlson.

"Having a kitchen seven to eight miles away is such an advantage. We have to take all our ingredients to the kitchen and it is closer for family members to come and help at different hours," said Country View Farms co-owner Margie Stats. Although closer, the layout of the kitchen took some getting used to.

"The kitchen in Algoma is compact and very efficient. The one at the technical school is a very large room to accommodate classes. It was a little different to get into a routine but it was adaptable."

The NWTC kitchen was originally built to establish a culinary course at the local campus; the plans never materialized. The collaboration with the Farm Market Kitchen Incubator gave the technical college a different direction for the facility. "We started in one direction and we have been flexible to meet the changing needs of the community. The kitchen was paid for by taxes payers and this is a way to utilize that to grow the economy within the county," said NWTC Sturgeon Bay Campus Dean Bob Loss.

"The general feeling is that we are making better use of that space to serve the students and the community there," said NWTC Dean of Community and Regional Learning Services Sally Martin. "We are looking to partner with (Carlson) to deliver some business training as well. Entrepreneurs might also be interested in getting classes in Excel, bookkeeping, Web design, and things that will help them in their businesses."

The incubator project is all about growing local businesses — in more ways than one.

"We encourage the processors to use as many local ingredients in products as possible — like butter, cheese, vegetables and fruit — to connect and build relationships with local producers," said Carlson. "We are hoping that restaurants, specialty stores and gift shops consider that they have something right in their own community to tap into. Local foods building local economy."