

Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery



Markets and Marketing:
The reluctant tweeter



Our Market research

- Informal market surveys
 - Individual consumers
 - Retail stores (small scale, independent shops)
 - Chefs at local restaurants
- Visited grocery stores to see what products they carry and how much they charge
- Talked to other artisan cheese makers to see what they are producing and how they are selling their products
- Determined what other fruit growers sell their fruit for at farmers' markets

Branding:

Our original logo



Our new logo



Direct Markets

- Started with farmers' markets and some on-farm sales (2005-2008)
- Added "CSG" in 2008-Community Supported Goat-members "adopted" a goat along with their cheese shares
- Expanded then retracted number of farmers' markets (at most, attended three Saturday markets)
- Cheese, Bread and Gelato CSA-partnered with bakers; multiple pick up locations
- Farm Summer/Fall "Open Houses" to attract folks to the farm to purchase products
- Added other "merch:" t-shirts, tea towels, goat milk soap, jams, caramels, crackers, spiced nuts

Wholesale Markets

- Specialty cheese shops
- Grocery stores: chains, independents
- Food cooperatives
- Restaurants
- Most located in IL: central IL and Chicago most important regions

How did we get the word out early on?

- Static website—created by a college student, couldn't update on our own, quickly out of date
- Website via Small Farm Central: farmer-friendly templates, very easy to update, e-commerce capability, blog posts
- Word of mouth-markets, tasting demos at stores, cheese events
- Free publicity in local media (newspaper articles)
- Facebook page

Marketing strategy over the years

- Built website when opened creamery in 2005
- No budget, just word of mouth, sampling at market
- 2008: Switched web host to Small Farm Central, created blog posts
- 2011 or 2012: Facebook page
- 2013: Twitter
- 2014: started paying for advertising—local media outlets
- 2015: focus on social media strategically- website make over, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram; use of Hootsuite social media coordinating site

Non-profit benefit events

- Eastern Illinois Food Bank: Rick Bayless, Dinner and cooking demonstration
- WILL: PBS/NPR local station, product also 25 min video about local food dinners
- These events build good will in the community



Keeping Up with Marketing Trends

- How do we increase awareness about our farm and all the farm's offerings?
- Many in our community not plugged into local food movement
- Want to extend reach to “Millenials” and Retiring Baby-Boomers
 - Understand how demographic groups use social media
 - Understand what motivates people to make purchasing decisions
- Want to use social media more strategically to translate interactions with people coming to the farm or farmers' market and purchasing our products & experiences
 - Can't rest on our laurels or rely on passive marketing strategies only

Current Marketing, Partnerships

- Social Media is key for our business
 - Website blog
 - Facebook posts
 - Twitter, Instagram, Pintrest
 - Credibles
- Partnering with other local farms
 - Guest farmers at Dinners on the Farm
 - Local winery, wild game ranch for tasting trail
 - Other farmstead creameries for cheese tastings
- Partnering with “Visit Champaign County”, local media and other businesses
 - Sharing Facebook and Twitter posts

Our social media “foot print”

- Website: www.prairiefruits.com
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/prairiefruitsfarm/
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PrairieFruits>
- Instagram:
www.instagram.com/explore/locations/1853432/
- Pinterest:
<https://www.pinterest.com/prairiefruits/>
- Documentary film about our farm “A Farmer’s Road” (now showing at private screenings and film festivals): <http://afarmersroad.com/>

Bring our products to new customers

- In-store tasting demos
- Attendance at food, cheese festivals
- Partnering with other food and beverage businesses
 - Cheese dinners with restaurants
 - Wine shop tastings
 - Beer dinners with local micro-breweries
- Considering a gelato cart to take to locations around town a la “food truck”