

NewsWatch

Wash. bread lab fuels cravings for local wheat

By T.J. BURNHAM

BREAKING bread with others, long considered a path to good relationships, is a staple of new marketing for growers in northwestern Washington.

A fully operational bread lab at Washington State University's Northwest Research and Extension Center in Mount Vernon, north of Seattle, shows that wheats grown locally can produce loaves of many kinds, which local consumers prefer and purchase.

The research bakery is so busy that a full-time baker, Jonathan McDowell, was just hired to head up the facility. Previously, station director Stephen Jones doubled as the top baker.

"The lab is geared solely towards helping regional bakers, millers, maltsters and farmers identify the best varieties and uses for locally grown and sourced grains," says Jones.

It is the only lab in the nation of this

Key Points

- WSU's Mount Vernon research center operates a bread lab.
- The research focuses on the use of locally produced grains.
- The bakery has become so busy that a full-time baker was recently hired.

type. With a main goal in research, the center provides service work for small-scale millers and bakers, he says.

Samples for testing this year came from Maine, North Carolina, Oregon, Arizona, California and Washington.

Most of the breads in the lab are naturally fermented and contain just wheat, water and salt.

Flavors and functionalities are developed and analyzed using specialized equipment, which can provide precise measurements of elements, such as the torque required to reach peak development and the amount of extensibility and elasticity in a particular variety's dough.

This all gives a chance for local bakers and millers to determine which local grains are best for their purpose, and provide growers with incentives to grow them.

"Within the last few years we have determined that not only can excellent breads be made from local wheat, but also the flavors are much more obvious and bright than breads made from drier areas," says Jones.

The lab is part of the Kneading Conference West, held each September at the research center. Last year, the session drew 250 from 12 states and three provinces in Canada, as well as Europe. Bakers, millers, farmers and regional food enthusiasts made up the audience.

Tours of the lab are given at the center at 16650 State Route 536 in Mount Vernon. For information, call 360-848-6120 or go online to plantbreeding.wsu.edu.



JONATHAN McDOWELL



BREAD LINE: Visitors on a field day at WSU's Mount Vernon research station sample bread baked at the center's lab.

Kneading conference Sept. 12-14

THE annual Kneading Conference West at Washington State University's Northwest Research and Extension Center in Mount Vernon, will be Sept. 12-14. One keynote speaker is Thor Oechsner, grandson of a German baker who grows a variety of bread grains in the Finger Lakes region of New York. Oechsner is co-owner of Ground Flour and farms 1,000 acres of certified organic grains.

Ground Flour is a milling venture offering value-added product lines. Oechsner's Wide Awake Bakery provides his business with a popular brand. He also operates a 700-member Community Supported Agriculture operation.

Darra Goldstein, founding editor of *Gastronomica*, will also be on the program. Her journal of food and culture was named "Publication of the Year" by the James Beard Foundation. An author of cookbooks as well, she has consulted in famous restaurants in New York City.

Sponsored by King Arthur Flour and the Port of Skagit, the conference will reflect the center's bid for a return of large grain operations to western Washington.

For more on the conference, go to kneadingconferencewest.com.

■ See how three companies join forces to control 35% of America's flour milling market. Turn to Page 10 for story.

News Briefs

Volare DC in Washington

Precision Laboratories recently announced the expanded label of Volare DC to include Washington registration. The aerial drift retardant delivers improved drift control, deposition and coverage when applied through aerial application equipment. Oversized spray droplets can break apart at application speeds above 125 mph, creating smaller droplets that are more susceptible to drift. Volare DC optimizes droplet size and deposition by "right-sizing" spray droplets to resist wind-stream

shear. Precision Laboratories is proud to have Simplot Grower Solutions as its distributor in the Plains and the West Coast markets. For more information on Volare DC and other Precision Laboratories products, visit www.precisionlab.com.

Learn to market local products

An educational workshop on Sept. 19 will help food manufacturers market their locally made products. The workshop is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds, Exhibit Hall, 15200 W. Sixth Ave., Golden, Colo. Fee is \$35

per person before Sept. 6, and \$45 after the deadline. Registration includes the program, workshop materials, continental breakfast and lunch. Preregistration is required. For details or to register, visit www.coloradoagriculture.com, or contact Shaina Knight at 303-239-4371.

Global warming to cut snow water

A new report projects that by the middle of this century, the amount of water stored in peak snowpack will drop about 56% in the McKenzie River watershed of the Oregon Cascade Range — and that

similar impacts may be found on low-elevation maritime snowpacks around the world. The full story is at bit.ly/13ecAKi.

Idaho 4-H aims for license plate

The Idaho Friends of 4-H board is asking fans of the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program to support a license-plate option to raise money for activities. The fund-raising group has an online survey to gauge opinions and collect signatures at www.surveymonkey.com/s/JAWS999.