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Building a Brand for Pennsylvania Products

By Jean H. Kummer and Nichole L. C. Bucher

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Over the centuries most Pennsylvanians have traded their team of horses for cars, their work boots for street shoes, and their plows for computers. yet we still hanker for a taste of our rural roots. While many of us may be weekend gardeners, farmers are lifetime gardeners, producing a quality, diverse food supply for the world year-round. What better way to support local farmers than by purchasing products grown or made by them?



The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's [PA Preferred® program](#) is the official branding program of agricultural products grown or made in the Commonwealth. It was designed to help consumers clearly identify products produced in Pennsylvania and make it easier for them to support our agricultural industry. From fresh fruits and vegetables to farmers' markets, plant nurseries, fiber mills, restaurants, hardwood products, wineries, and Christmas trees, PA Preferred represents the diversity of the Keystone state's agriculture.

The program's more than twenty-five hundred members have the opportunity to brand their products as being produced or processed in Pennsylvania using the logo, a gold checkmark in a blue keystone. PA Preferred is working for these members. Putting the Pa Preferred logo on final products and working with processors and retailers who are part of the program gives members entrance to the marketplace with a distinctive advantage that can mean expanded sales and a larger customer base. large retailers are answering the call of their customers to source more Pennsylvania products. From cheesecake and eggs to craft beer, PA Preferred has assisted its members in breaking into large retail outlets.

Not only does it work for members, but PA Preferred also works for consumers. When buying products identified by the PA Preferred logo they are supporting local farms and producers and helping keep farmers and food processing jobs in Pennsylvania. the program also means Pennsylvanians can prepare affordable, fresh, and nutritious meals for their families using products for which the Commonwealth has earned a worldwide reputation of outstanding quality.

The keystone and checkmark logo isn't just a marketing tool, it's a visual representation of the sixty-three thousand family farms and many more small businesses and companies that are at the heart of our quality of life.

Read on to learn a bit more about some of our PA Preferred members and their offerings including cheese, wine, and apples.

Calkins Creamery Brings Family Back to the Fold

In The Beginning

Highland Farm, tucked among the hills of northeastern Pennsylvania, was established by the Bryant family in 1841. The seventh generation of Bryants is living and working on the 240-acre dairy farm alongside a member of the fourth generation, Doris Bryant.

Starting Over

Highland Farm's dairy barn burned to the ground in 2002. Doris Bryant's son Bill and his wife Debra decided to rebuild the barn, and their son Zack and his wife Kate returned home to the farm to form a partnership. One year after the fire, the Bryants were milking cows in the new facility.

It wasn't long before Bill and Debra's daughter emily returned to scenic Wayne County from Bakersfield, California, with her husband Jay Montgomery. While on the West Coast the Montgomerys had developed a keen interest in making artisan cheese from fresh milk; he worked in a plant manufacturing ice cream and she enrolled in a cheese-making course at Cal-Poly University. Emily, with a degree in food science from the Pennsylvania state University (where as an undergraduate she worked at its famous Berkey Creamery) and Jay, who earned an industrial engineering degree from Purdue University, researched cheese and eagerly helped the family launch a dairy processing operation.



Highland Farm, a seventh-generation family farm in scenic Wayne County, is home to Calkins Creamery which launched production of artisanal cheeses in January 2007. COURTESY CALKINS CREAMERY

Working so closely together on a daily basis could cause tension in even the strongest of families, but the Bryants revel in working together. "Our family's rich farming heritage brings us together," said Emily. "My generation wants to see the farm continue to succeed for our children. We know from our childhood experiences that there is no better place to raise a family."

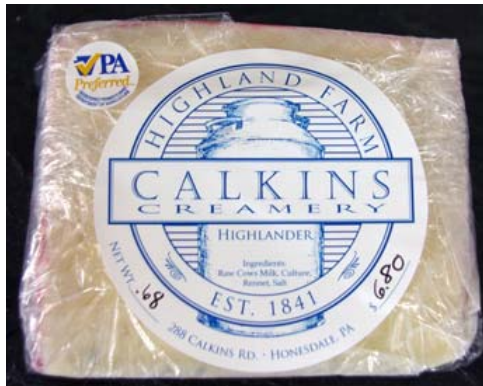
Recognizing the challenges of supporting several families with income generated by a single farm, the Bryants formulated a plan to add value to their milk. Research showed that by selling directly to consumers they could build brand loyalty for their

quality products while securing repeat customers who are willing to pay a premium price. Because many of the area's residents commute to New York City, the creamery's core market has become a higher-end consumer market that prefers locally-produced products. They decided to focus on two products lines, cheese and naturally-raised meats. Emily makes cheese, and brother Zack raises livestock.

Making Cheese

Construction on Calkins Creamery began in May 2006 and Emily started making cheese the following January. She uses fresh raw milk from the herd of ninety Holstein cows that her father and brothers milk twice a day. The milk is delivered through an underground gravity-flow pipeline directly from the bulk tank in the barn to a vat in the creamery. This unique system allows the milk to remain free from contaminants and minimizes waste. Emily uses fifteen hundred pounds of milk for each batch of cheese which she makes three to four times each week. That equates to 150 pounds of cheese; ten pounds of milk make one pound of cheese.

After the milk is heated to nearly 90 degrees Emily adds the culture specific to each flavor and rennet, the enzyme that solidifies the milk. After approximately one hour the cheese is hard enough to cut into curds that settle to the bottom of the vat. The leftover liquid called whey is drained and fed to pigs that are raised by Zack. The curds are then put into the wheels, or molds, and pressed to remove the last of the whey. Emily chooses not to add orange coloring, leaving the cheese its natural pale shade of yellow. The wheels are then stored in a temperature- and humidity-controlled room to age. In the European tradition the cheeses age with a wax covering or a natural rind, depending on the variety.



Highlander cheese is a young Gouda and the company's creamiest semi-hard cheese. PHOTO BY JEAN H. KUMMER/PA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Emily uses raw milk to make semi-hard cheeses that must age for at least sixty days. She currently makes twenty traditional artisan varieties, among them Caerphilly, Cheddar, Gouda, Harvarti, St. Paulin, and Tomme; but also experiments with humorously named variations including a garlic Cheddar called Vampire Slayer and a dill-flavored Harvarti christened 4 Dog Dill.

A pasteurizer was installed in the creamery in 2011 enabling Emily to make softer cheeses that require less time to age, specifically smoked mozzarella, baby brie, and flavored cheese spreads. In 2008 Calkins Creamery designated smoke signal, an apple-wood smoked Gouda, as its "Cheese for a Cause." Each year the creamery donates 10 percent of the cheese's sales to the Michael J. Bryant Memorial Fund, established by his parents and administered by the Wayne County Community Foundation, in honor of Zack, Emily, and Carrie Bomgardner's younger brother who died suddenly of a brain aneurysm at the age of twenty-seven in 2007. He was co-owner of the creamery and worked on the farm with his father Bill and brother Zack. Despite having been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Michael was an active volunteer firefighter with the Beach Lake Creek Fire Company which posthumously honored him as Firefighter of the Year in 2008.

Marketing The Product

Jay Montgomery and his sister-in-law Carrie Bomgardner market the creamery through a website, e-newsletter, and innovative outreach efforts.

The cheese is sold in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Washington, D.C., in small markets, farm markets, and in many Whole Foods retail stores from Pike to Allegheny counties. They even have a presence in Philadelphia's famed DiBruno Brothers stand at the Italian Market known for its delicious cheeses.

The Bryants prove true the old adage, "the family that works together stays together." By seamlessly melding the traditional with the new they are living proof that respect for the old ways, perseverance, and embracing new technology make all the difference in the world. In the end, they are preserving a time-honored family business and a rural way of life.

Adams County Fruit Producers have Unique Approach

Meet The Family

The Rices of Gardners, Adams County, do more than just grow apples. Their fruit packing company and fruit orchards are helping drive the local economy and they have a unique local, state, and international approach to doing business. Brothers David, Ted, John, and Mark operate the R&L Orchard and the Rice Fruit Company, established by their grandfather Arthur Rice Sr., in 1913. They represent the seventh generation of their family to grow apples in northern Adams County.

David is president of the Rice Fruit Company, overseeing the plant packing operations and personnel; Ted manages the office operations and accounting; and John serves as sales and marketing manager. Mark is president of the R&L Orchard Company, overseeing one thousand acres of fruit orchards.



The Rice brothers (from left) Ted, John, and David. Mark, the orchard manager, was out in the field tending to crops.
PHOTO BY JEAN H. KUMMER/PA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

About The Business

The Rice Fruit Company is the largest fresh apple-packing facility in the East. Twenty percent of the fruit packaged by the Rice Fruit Company comes from the R&L Orchards, while 80 percent comes from seventy-five fruit-growing families, primarily in Adams County. While most of the apples and other fruit grown in Pennsylvania are processed for products such as applesauce and juice, the Rices focus on growing and packing fresh fruit. More than one million bushels of apples and peaches are packaged at the plant each year. "Large retailers are interested in selling locally-grown produce," John Rice explained. "We're trying to capitalize on that by offering the best service and the best quality fruit from a local family-operated business."

Both segments of the rice businesses are on the cutting edge of technology. In the orchards Mark is growing peaches, nectarines, pears, and more than fifteen varieties of apples. Other unique fruits are grown such as donut peaches, a full-flavored peach shaped like a donut that originated in China, and apple-shaped Asian Pears, noted for being exceptionally juicy, crisp, and firm to the touch when ripe. Mark also experiments with many different tree growing and pruning techniques.

Preparing Fruit For Sale



Although the harvesting of the fruit requires manual labor, most of the equipment in the processing and packing facilities is state-of-the-art. The fruit is gently moved through water to a pre-sizer that

The Rice Fruit Company uses state-of-the-art equipment to sort apples by

SIZE. PHOTO BY VALERIE RAMSBURG/RICE FRUIT COMPANY

electronically sorts the fruit

by size and color. Each piece of fruit is then evaluated by hand and checked for defects. The fruit is washed, brushed, and waxed to prevent shriveling, and then packed for shipment. The more perishable stone fruits (such as peaches and nectarines) are packed and shipped within days of picking. Many of the apples, however, are stored in atmosphere-controlled rooms with reduced oxygen to keep the fruit in a state of suspended animation. This allows apples to be kept through the winter and then marketed in the spring and summer.

When storage space becomes available during the spring and summer months, the Rice Fruit Company stores and packages fruit grown in the Southern Hemisphere. This work is done under contract for importers and the products are not sold under their labels. "The fruit industry is becoming increasingly global," said John. The company repackages sweet cherries from Chile in December and January which it ships to stores throughout the eastern United States. Rice also receives and reships apples from Chile, Argentina, and New Zealand, and pears from Argentina and South Africa.

Dealing With A Deadly Disease

In 1999 the Plum Pox Virus (PPV) was found in northern Adams County and the R&L Orchard Company lost more than 120 acres of peach and nectarine trees to the virus. As part of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's efforts to eradicate the disease which affects trees in the Prunus family, or stone fruits, the Rices had to remove all the trees in the infected area. The disease does not actually kill the tree but keeps it from producing fruit.

As part of the eradication program, a quarantine zone was established, putting a ban on planting in the infected ground for at least three years. In response, the family purchased an apple orchard outside the quarantine zone and now grows peaches on the property.

In addition to being PA Preferred members, the brothers' father helped create the Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Board in 1962. John has been a member of this board since 1987 and has served as chairman. The Rices have established a reputation in their community, throughout the Keystone State, and around the world as a leader in the fruit business. They have set high standards for the industry and continually strive to raise that level.

A Second Generation Returns

Growing An Idea

Karl Zimmerman's "last best great idea" has turned out to be a pretty good one, judging by the success of his family's Shade Mountain Winery and Vineyards near Middleburg, Snyder County. Twenty years ago Karl and his wife Carolyn took a risk and began planting grapevines on their sixty-five-acre farm where they had previously raised beef cattle and hogs, and grew soybeans, corn, and Christmas trees.



Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary George Greig and Jennifer Zimmerman of the Shade Mountain Winery and Vineyards inspect grapes.

PHOTO BY JEAN H. KUMMER/PA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

"We were searching for a sideline or niche agriculture business that didn't require too much acreage," Karl said. "We heard a saying that "'the poorer the land, the better the grapes you can grow,' so we decided we were in the right place to give it a try." The Zimmermans planted grapes on their acreage, and initially sold their grapes to winemakers. Ten years into their venture, they converted their nineteenth-century bank barn into a winery where they now make thirty thousand gallons of wine in thirty different varieties each year from forty different types of grapes.

Bringing In The Next Generation

Karl and Carolyn have four children, all college graduates, who joined the family business. Daughters Amy and Jennifer moved away from Snyder County after graduating but have returned to work side-by-side with their parents and brothers Bill and Ben. Amy's husband Brian Scorsone and their children Carly and Peter, Bill's wife Kara, and Ben's fiancée Wendy often help with the business.

The business supports ten full-time employees including family members, and several part-time and seasonal workers. Carolyn heads the shop and the wine tastings along with Amy and Jennifer, who can also be found among the vines picking grapes during the harvest season. They also host weddings and parties in the six-year-old addition to the barn, operate three satellite stores, organize an annual fall festival (complete with grape stomping), and exhibit at fairs, festivals, and special events. The male members of the family spend most of their time in the fields and in the winery concocting and testing recipes.

"My parents are resourceful and self-sustaining," Jennifer says. "My dad has an uncanny gift of being able to read situations and then tinker with an idea until he figures out the most efficient way to make something work."

Establishing The Brand



Shade Mountain Winery and Vineyards produces award-winning wines. PHOTO BY JEAN H. KUMMER/PA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Shade Mountain's three satellite stores are located in Bloomsburg, Columbia County, Northumberland, Northumberland County, and Millheim, Centre County. The winery's far-away fans can also order online; information is available at the [Shade Mountain Winery website](#), and on its Facebook page.

Shade Mountain Wines are award-winning, earning several medals at the Pennsylvania Farm Show. The Zimmermans' most recent victory was garnering a gold medal at the 2011 show for their Sangiovese

wine.

Pennsylvania is home to 140 licensed wineries with 230 wine grape growers, ranking the Keystone State fourth in production with more than 62,000 tons of grapes. The industry collectively contributes \$2.35 billion to the state economy, and employs more than 10,500 jobs, and as a major agritourism attraction draws nearly 900,000 visitors to wineries each year. The Zimmermans are ardent advocates for the industry at the state level. Karl serves as president for the Pennsylvania Wine Marketing and Research Program, and Jennifer is a member of the board of the Pennsylvania Winery Association. "The fates pushed and pulled us in this direction," observed Karl of his family's radical decision to change and aggressively grow their business.

The direction has not only been good for the Zimmerman family, but for those who enjoy their fine wines and for the industry as a whole. It has helped the next generation foster a love for agriculture that will keep Pennsylvania growing - not too shabby for Karl's last best great idea.

Meeting Consumer Demand is Top Priority

It's About Location

Just fifteen miles south of Pennsylvania's second largest city, Pittsburgh, and one mile from the Monongahela River lined with shuttered steel mills, is a treasure nestled in the verdant rolling hills of Allegheny County. Triple B Farms, a four-hundred-acre working family farm, focuses on diversification and agritourism, offering its urban and suburban neighbors the opportunity to experience country life for a day while also providing access to fresh, wholesome food products.



Triple B Farms is located on Berry Lane in Monongahela. PHOTO BY JEAN H. KUMMER/PA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Building A Business

As the steel industry collapsed Ron Beinlich, an engineer for the U.S. Steel Corporation, and his wife Carolyn established Triple B Farms in 1985 in Monongahela. They began growing strawberries, pumpkins, and sweet corn, along with raising a small herd of beef cattle. After their son Bill graduated from Penn State University he returned to the farm with his wife Sue to form a partnership with his parents. Their four children Nancy, Natalie, Abby, and Will are the third generation to live on Triple B Farms.

Triple B Farms grows a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. "We plant two acres of tomatoes which is about seven thousand plants, nearly thirty acres of sweet corn, and an acre-and-a-half of peppers," said Bill. The farm also has black and red raspberry plants and a peach orchard. About five years ago the Beinlichs ventured into the apple business and now have seven acres of apple trees.

Meeting Consumer Demand



The Beinlichs sell fresh produce, homemade fudge, baked goods, and locally made products at their retail operation located on the farm. PHOTO BY JEAN H. KUMMER/PA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Pittsburgh families can enjoy several special events at the farm including a strawberry festival in the spring, raspberry and peach festivals in the summer, and apple and pumpkin

festivals from late September through Halloween. "We estimate nearly three thousand people a day visit the farm for the festivals for pick-your-own berries, pumpkins, and apples," remarked Bill.

Visitors enjoy family-friendly activities offered by Triple B such as petting and feeding farm animals, hayrides, picnics, and tube slides modeled and named after famous Pittsburgh tunnels. Bill even designed a bridge in the goat pen resembling the city's Smithfield Street Bridge, christening it the Goatsfield Street Bridge. The Beinlichs host birthday parties and school tours as well.

Carolyn, affectionately known as Mrs. B, operates the on-site market, the Country Farm Market and Gift Shop, which sells fresh produce, homemade fudge, and baked goods, and a number of other local products.

Marketing The Products

In addition to PA Preferred, the Beinlichs participate in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which helps low-income seniors and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, ensuring recipients have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The family is involved with many state organizations, including the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association and the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture's Buy Fresh Buy Local program, which help promote their products and provide educational opportunities. The Beinlichs also partner with the greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, which gleanes the fields to collect fresh produce for underserved areas.

Sue oversees the marketing and advertising for the farm, recognizing the importance of promotion; [Triple B's website](#) offers up-to-date information about events and in-season produce. She also prepares commercials for local cable television stations and newspapers, and maintains the farm's Facebook page.

Triple B Farms combines the best of all worlds by providing its urban neighbors the chance to experience country life and enjoy fresh, locally-produced foods from their progressive, working farm. In turn, the farm provides the Beinlichs the opportunity to make a living doing what they love.

To learn more visit the [PA Preferred website](#) or contact [program coordinator Bryan Keister](#) by email or (717) 772-3094.

No More Taxes!

Agriculture is Pennsylvania's leading industry with more than sixty-three thousand farm families and 7.65 million acres of farmland generating \$5.7 billion in cash receipts. Family farms represent a vital part of the Keystone State's heritage, but for decades the Commonwealth had demanded a share of the value when they passed from one member to another. The value of the land is often high, and sizable tax bills have frequently forced families to sell farms instead of passing them to the next generation. Now, however, farmers will no longer be required to pay a death tax



Grapes at Shade Mountain Winery and Vineyards. PHOTO BY JEAN H. KUMMER/PA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

to ensure their legacy can continue.

On June 30, Governor Tom Corbett signed landmark legislation eliminating state inheritance tax on working farms. "The death tax has forced too many families to sell their legacy, their land, and their way of life," Corbett said. "The tax has put too many farms out of business because it was too expensive for farmers to pass them down to their children. This will happen no more. We intend to save our farms."

Previously, when a landowner died, heirs to the farm property had to pay an inheritance tax of 4.5 percent if they were adult children and 12 percent if they were siblings of the deceased.

PAgrows, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's economic development initiative, is helping farmers understand farm transition and finances, including state and federal grant and low interest loan programs to grow their operations. To learn more, visit the [PAgrows website](#) or telephone (717) 705-9513.

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission recently completed "[Pennsylvania's Agricultural History Project](#)." The project addresses the scope and depth of the Commonwealth's agricultural resources and is an invaluable tool that can be used to protect Pennsylvania's natural and rural areas.

Jean H. Kummer, a native of Butler County, serves as the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Community Outreach Director, and Nicole L. C. Bucher, an Adams County native, serves as Deputy Press Secretary for the department. Together they possess eleven years of experience working in communications for the department through media outreach, consumer education, and show and event coordination. Both are agriculture graduates of the Pennsylvania State University.

The editor thanks the following for graciously providing illustrations for this feature: Emily Bryant Montgomery, Calkins Creamery, Honesdale; Valerie Ramsburg, Rice Fruit Company, Gardners; and Jean H. Kummer, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

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