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FROM FARM TO TABLE: MATT ACHENBACH'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE DAIRY INDUSTRY AND HOSTING THE 2025 CRAWFORD COUNTY DAIRY BREAKFAST.

Written by: Chad Achenbach

43rd Crawford County Dairy Breakfast host family, Achenbach Hy-View Farm.

Left to right in the back row: Steve, Briggs, Emory
Middle Row: Terri, Keaton, Matt, Owen. Front: Hadleigh

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with Matt Achenbach, whose family hosted the 43rd Crawford County Dairy Breakfast. Matt is a third-generation farmer at Achenbach Hy-View Farm, located about a mile south of Eastman on Highway 27. He operates the farm alongside his parents, Steve and Terri, and his children: Owen, Keaton, Emory, Briggs, and Hadleigh.

The farm's story began in 1959–1960 when Carl and Marlene Achenbach purchased the property and started milking 40 Holstein cows. They raised their children—Victor, Dean, Steve, Gary, Dale, Lonnie, Bonnie, and Donna—on the farm, instilling in them a strong work ethic from an early age.

In 1974, their son Steve joined the farm full-time, and by 1980, he and his brother Lonnie officially took over as partners. Together, they expanded operations to 75–80 cows, with a focus on genetics and selling breeding bulls. In 2000, the partnership dissolved when Lonnie left, and Steve continued managing the farm solo. In 2012, with the help of Steve's son Matt, the farm expanded again—this time with a new free-stall barn and parlor milking system. Today, they milk 250 registered Holsteins and farm roughly 700 acres, mainly growing corn and alfalfa.

When I asked Matt what advice he'd offer to younger generations interested in dairy farming, he emphasized the importance of work ethic: **"The more work you do, the easier it is to survive or bloom because you know your farm inside and out."**

He stressed the need for early involvement in agriculture to help youth develop an appreciation for the industry.

"The more they're involved, the more they're going to enjoy what happens on a farm and appreciate what their hard work produces."

Matt is proud of where the farm stands today. While he feels they've reached a high level of efficiency on the milking side, he sees potential for growth in field technology. One recent upgrade was installing an Ag Leader system on their sprayer, including automatic shutoff valves—a change expected to cut chemical expenses by 6%. In an era of rising input costs, small improvements like this can make a big difference in long-term profitability.

Of course, challenges remain. **"There are ups and downs every day,"** Matt said, **"but you just have to learn how to balance that bell curve into a flat line."**

He's also paying close attention to the current crossover between the dairy and beef markets, as more farmers explore breeding beef on dairy animals. While he anticipates that beef prices will eventually fall and milk prices will rebound, he believes this trend will leave a lasting impact. **"It's often more cost-effective to sell a calf on day one than to raise it for years before seeing any return,"** he explained.

As for the Dairy Breakfast held on June 7th, it required months of preparation. The Crawford County Dairy Promotion Committee—led by Mark Forsythe, Teresa Zart, and Steve Esser—handled the logistics: food, tents, tables, and chairs. Matt's responsibilities included gathering donations and the enormous task of cleaning the entire farm.

"It's like hosting your family for Christmas," he joked, **"except instead of just cleaning your house, you clean the whole farm."**

Major projects like landscaping began three months in advance, with the final week focused on polishing the details.

Matt's favorite part of hosting? Giving people the chance to experience farm life firsthand. **"It's great to offer that opportunity to someone who's never seen a cow or sat in a tractor,"** he said. **"It helps them understand where their food comes from."**

When asked what advice he'd give other families considering hosting the breakfast, his answer was simple: **"Do it."**

He elaborated, **"Most think it's a big undertaking, but it's like any other project. Once you say yes, you'll get it done. Every farmer's wired that way. The more farms that host, the more we can educate consumers."**

As we wrapped up our conversation, Matt reflected on the future of dairy farming. While fewer farmers remain each year due to the demands of the job, he believes those with grit and determination can still find immense reward.
"It's a 24/7/365 job," he said, **"but if you love it and put in the work, it can be incredibly fulfilling."**

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JUNE DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

CHEEZZY TATOR PUFFS

Prep: 10 min
Cook: 15 min
Total: 25 min
Servings: 6
Yield: 12 puffs

Ingredients:

Cooking Spray
2 c. cold leftover mashed potatoes
3 large eggs
½ c. shredded Sharp Cheddar cheese
½ c. shredded vermont white Cheddar cheese
2 green onions, chopped
1 tsp. dried chives
2 slices of bacon, cooked and crumbled
½ tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Sour cream, or as needed, for dipping

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degree F. Spray a standard muffin tin liberally with cooking spray.
2. Reserve a tbsp. shredded Cheddar and 2 tbsp. white Cheddar for topping, stir mashed potatoes, remaining cheese stated in step one, eggs, and onion together in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Fold in dried chives, Parmesan cheese and bacon.
3. Divide mixture evenly into 12 muffin cups. Sprinkle reserved cheese on top.
4. Bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Remove from the oven; let stand for 5 minutes.
5. Using a dinner knife, gently run over each puff and remove carefully. Serve immediately with sour cream.

Cook's Note:

Taste before seasoning; leftover mash potatoes may not need additional seasoning. The puffs reheat well in an air fryer.

FFA CORNER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Mckenna Rupp
FFA Chapter: Boscobel
Upcoming Fundraisers: In October we will be having our fruit fundraiser.
Positions Held: 23-25 Secretary, 25-26 President

What is the best experience you have had in FFA so far? The best experience I've had is probably the opportunities to go to conventions and meeting lots of new people at them.

What made you decide to join FFA? My freshman year of high school I transferred from Richland Center. Knowing I needed to be involved in something, FFA became that something. Being apart of FFA made it easier to make friends and become more involved with things at school.

What are your plans after high school and how will your experience in FFA help you in your future? I have a couple different ideas after high school but my main one is teaching Ag; my experience in FFA will help me better understand what I'll need to "teach" and how to lead an example on others unsure if FFA is right for them.

We deeply appreciate all the FFA members in our surrounding communities for their dedication to agriculture, leadership, and service. At Peoples State Bank, we're proud to support and spotlight our local FFA presidents, celebrating the hard work and bright futures of these outstanding young leaders.

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