

Enjoy Wisconsin's Dairy Breakfasts

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The Senator writes about the annual celebration of **June Dairy Month** – the county Dairy Breakfast. Each one features local dairy farms, farmers and tasty treats. Each one is a chance for people to connect with each other and with their rural roots. The dairy industry contributes significantly to our state's economy which is why each year we celebrate June Dairy Month.

MADISON - June is dairy month. Wisconsin celebrates dairy in a special way: the dairy breakfast. Folks come early for the fresh pancakes, sausage, cheese curds and country air.

They stay for the ice cream – “Mom, this is the first time I’ve had ice cream for breakfast” – and for the neighbors.

“I’ve seen people I haven’t seen in 18 years,” the woman from Whitehall told me.

“I see people at the dairy breakfast I see nowhere else all year,” said another from Independence.

Dairy breakfasts bring together folks from all walks of life and all age groups. The youngsters love the animals, the face painting and climbing on straw bales.

The oldsters love the youngsters.

"See the gal in the cowboy boots?" the woman said. Four young ladies walked up the hill in front of us. The Dairy Princess and her court were dressed in formal gowns. Only one wore boots under her beautiful dress.

"She's my granddaughter," the woman told me. "She wants to be a farmer and loves pigs. She finally found a boyfriend who loves to farm as much as she does."

The couple was working for an older local farmer, learning the trade from the experienced man. They were also planning to attend the animal husbandry program at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

"Tuition is so expensive," a grandfather told me. "Don't you think the state should put more money into the universities? When I graduated tuition, room and board, books and everything was only \$238."

I heard lots of stories about how proud parents and grandparents are of their off-spring. The work students accomplished in school is top on their list. "Joey plays the trumpet now," one mom said. "Katie graduated with honors last week," said a proud grandfather. Participation in youth activities, especially 4H, was also high on the list for elders to share. "Can you imagine, little Bradley is in 4H and showing rabbits at the fair," said another.

Families dominated the talk at the dairy breakfasts I've attended. Tied for a close second was food and the weather. Maybe the weather won out in Melrose when dark clouds and a heavy rainstorm threatened festivities at the Jackson County breakfast on the Pfaff farm.

People also wanted to share concerns about dark clouds they saw in state government. I heard most about schools and health care. Folks told stories about cutbacks in local schools. Old band uniforms, new fees, sports combined with neighboring schools and many other actions to save money had people worried about whether the state was properly investing in the future of their children and grandchildren.

"We've got the best way of life," one older woman told me. "I just hate to see the younger generation feel like they can't stay here because the schools don't get what they need to do a good job."

Dairy breakfasts aren't complete without animals.

Our local dairy breakfasts show-case the latest technology in robotic milking, GPS driven crop care and cow comfort. Owners and local farmers joined together to explain to city and country folks alike the challenges and rewards of farming.

And the relationship between animals and people knows no bounds between country and urban cousins. I heard about the family dog that saved the kitten by barking at the tree until the family came to the rescue and the steer that set the troubled teen on the road to recovery from depression.

The county elders were not to be out done with stories about horses rescuing their wayward masters. One fellow decked out in black and white spotted pants and wearing a black and white cap with a stuffed cow perched atop shared one of his favorite stories.

The team of horses waited patiently for their master to return. It never mattered how tired or incapacitated master was...the team knew the way home by heart.

If you missed the local dairy breakfast there is still time. If you live in western Wisconsin the Pierce County breakfast will be held at the Richardson Family Farm in Maiden Rock on June 21st. The Buffalo County Dairy Breakfast is June 28th from 7 am to 11:30 am at the Weisenbeck Farm in Maxville Township.

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