



MAMP

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF MEAT PROCESSORS

PROCESSOR NEWS

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EDITION NO. 2

Tony Dehmer, President
401 Central Ave E
St. Michael, MN 55376
763-497-2455
Email: Tonydehmer@aol.com

Jordan McCallum, Executive Director
11373 Neal Ave S
Hastings, MN 55033
Office: 651-247-9966
Email: jordan@mamponline.com

Hello again,

If I'm being honest, I've lost track of how many times I've started drafting this newsletter. There's just so much I want to share about the convention—so many great moments, stories, and people that made it special. Each time I tried to capture everything, the letter just kept growing. My hope is that what follows gives you a real sense of how meaningful this year's event was.

Serving as president of MAMP is an honor I don't take lightly. Over the years, the people in this organization have become more than colleagues—they've become true friends to me and my family. Convention week is always the highlight of my year, whether I'm working on new products, helping on the board, or just catching up with all of you. With everyone's busy schedules, it's rare to have this time to reconnect, share what we're working on, and talk about the future of our industry. When I was younger, I thought I had most of the answers. Now, with a little more experience, I realize just how much I still have to learn—and how much I learn from all of you.

I want to thank everyone for the kind words and condolences after my father, Joe, passed away in January. Seeing the tribute to him in the last newsletter meant a lot to me and my family. He lived a remarkable life. Our plant has been entering products in the show since the last convention in Rochester, and it took us a few tries to get our first award. He was so proud when we finally did. Every year after that, we'd call him after the awards ceremony to share the results. This year, after more than fifteen years, we finally took home a Best of Show award (and tied Petty Brothers for the Sweepstakes award). We were over the moon. But when I got back to my room, it hit me that I couldn't call him to tell him the news. I know how proud he would've been. As my family went to open the hospitality room, I took a moment alone and let it all sink in. Then, looking around at all of you, I realized that this community is truly my extended family. You shared in our

excitement and pride, and for that, I am deeply grateful.

After the board meeting on Sunday, my son Andy called me. He told me he'd left a message on Grandpa's phone, saying, "We finally did it." That moment brought everything full circle for me, and I was reminded yet again of how lucky I am.

Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make the convention a success—the product show committee, judges, instructors, sponsors, vendors, the board members, our secretary, Jordan, the hotel and catering staff, and everyone else who pitched in. A special thank you to the JB table for donating their 50/50 raffle winnings back to the scholarship fund.

Most of all, thank you to every single member of this group. Your support and friendship mean the world to me. It's a privilege to be part of such a dedicated, generous, and genuine community. I am truly grateful.

Until we meet again,

Tony Dehmer



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Important Phone Numbers



AAMP Office

Elizabethtown - PA 717-367-1168

Website: www.aamp.com

E-mail: aamp@aamp.com

Board of Animal Health

Marion Garcia - 651-201-6805

MN Meat, Poultry and Egg Inspection Program

Levi Muhl - 651-201-6216

MN Beef Council

763-479-1011, E-mail kelly@mnbeef.org

MN Pork Board

507-345-8814, E-mail pam@mnepork.com

Commissioner's Office

Thom Petersen, Commissioner -

651-201-6219

Thom.Petersen@state.mn.us

Small Plant Help Desk

1-877-374-7435

Email: InfoSource@fsis.usda.gov

Website: FSIS Small Plant Help Desk

Retail Food Inspector Supervisor

Ian Erickson, PhD, REHS

1-218-349-4083

Email: ian.erickson@state.mn.us

WOW – what a convention! Every year, I leave the MAMP Convention feeling incredibly proud to be part of this industry. The amount of support, friendship, and community throughout the convention never ceases to amaze me, and it truly reinforces my belief that we have the best group of meat processors anywhere.

First and foremost, congratulations to Dehmer's Meats on earning this year's Best of Show award! We also witnessed something that has not happened in 25 years – a tie for the Sweepstakes Award. Even more incredible, both times nearly resulted in a three-way tie, with the third-place locker being just one point away.

This year's Sweepstakes Award winners were Dehmer's Meats and Petty Brothers Meats. The last time this happened was in 2001, when the Sweepstakes Award was shared by Greg's Meat Processing and Steve's Meat Market.

2001 Sweepstakes Award Winners

2026 Sweepstakes Award Winners

Another huge highlight from this year's convention was our largest product show ever, with 529 products entered from 29 different plants. That is an incredible accomplishment and a true reflection of the quality and pride our members put into their products. Congratulations to everyone who entered!

I also want to extend a sincere thank you to all of the judges who dedicated their time and expertise to evaluating products throughout the competition. I heard from multiple judges that this was one of the most competitive shows they have judged, and selecting winners was no easy task. Minnesota should be extremely proud – I truly believe we produce some of the best meat products in the nation.

With AAMP being held in Milwaukee this year, I hope many of you take advantage of the opportunity to compete on the national stage. The AAMP Convention

will take place July 9–11, and I am especially excited to share that I will be serving as a judge at the ACMC this year.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to help judge the Minnesota show while in graduate school, serve annually as a judge for the Wisconsin show, and assist with the AAMP ACMC during graduate school as well. It is truly an honor to now be asked to serve as a judge for the ACMC.

That being said, if you are ever looking for feedback or advice on products for future competitions, I am always happy to help answer questions from a judge's perspective.

Looking ahead, we are excited to once again host the MAMP Fall Tour on September 10, 2026, in Owatonna, Minnesota. Registration details and additional information will be shared soon.

We also have the State Fair Contest to look forward to later this summer, which is always another great opportunity to showcase the incredible products made across our state.

I hope you all have a wonderful spring, and thank you again for making this year's convention such a memorable one.

– Jordan McCallum



MAMP
MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF MEAT PROCESSORS

Next MAMP Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, May 20, 2026
11am
South St. Paul, MN



Minnesota

MEAT MINUTE

Volume 13, Issue 4
April 2026



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In accordance with the Americans
with Disabilities Act, this information
is available in alternative forms of
communication upon request by calling
651-201-6000. TTY users can call the
Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA
is an equal opportunity employer and
provider

Meat Plant Resources

There are websites that provide resources for meat establishments. Be sure to visit these websites to find useful resources.

Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (NMPAN) is an organization that helps small meat processing plants. They offer resources for starting a meat business, providing technical assistance and they host webinars highlighting training and marketing strategies. NMPAN provides a unique opportunity to book a call with a Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance Consultant.

[Check out the NMPAN website](#)

The American Meat Science Association (AMSA) launched “The Meat Locker.” The website provides resources and technical information for meat processors of all sizes. The website addresses common topics and challenges meat processors face, such as sanitation, quality assurance, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), processing, food safety, business operations, labeling, and more.

[Check out The Meat Locker](#)





FDA Withdraws Authorization For Use of Red No. 3.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has amended its color additive regulation to no longer allow the use of Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics (FD&C) Red No. 3 in food. FD&C Red No. 3 can be found in some spices used to make meat products. Food manufacturers have until January 15, 2027, to reformulate their products. Meat establishments should be aware this may change how the spices they receive are formulated. This may result in a possible change in their product's ingredient statements.



Materials Available for Coping with Farm and Rural Stress

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is happy to provide materials to people and organizations who work with farmers, ranchers, and others connected to agriculture, who experience stress to help raise awareness of the services available to them. Order some for your counter at www.mda.state.mn.us/farmstressorders.

For free, confidential, 24/7 help with stress, anxiety, depression, anger, relationships, substance use, business and financial problems and more visit the Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline at: www.minnesotafarmstress.org. You may also:

CALL: 833-600-2670 (press 1)

TEXT: farmstress to 898211

EMAIL: farmstress@state.mn.us

2026 Meat Inspector Calendar No Inspection Dates

May 25 – Memorial Day

June 19 – Juneteenth Holiday

July 3 – July 4 Observed

September 7 – Labor Day

November 11 – Veterans Day

November 26-27 –
Thanksgiving Day and Day After

December 25 – Christmas Day

Meat, Poultry, and Egg Inspection Staff

Nikki Neeser, DVM 651-201-6225
Levi Muhl 651-201-6216
Jennifer Stephe 651-248-2566
Andy Siira 320-295-2066
Alex Brandt 651-201-6308
Nicole Droher 651-231-5457
Michaela Gadiant 651-201-6630
Heidi Varberg 651-201-6009
Lisa Wetz 651-201-6191
Nicole Wilson 651-201-6024
Catrina Andree 507-440-5861

Josie Lenneman 763-710-0447
Katie Brigan 320-385-0034
Kodi Klimek 320-424-8000
Sarah Current 320-874-0926
Ashley Hassler 320-221-6507
Jennifer Hede 651-338-7145
Cullan Hewitt 320-304-4624
Jennifer Hofer 612-396-4941
Megan Jansa 651-396-9176
Justin Jarocki 651-285-8327
Myrrh-Anna Kienitz 651-802-2789

Carol Konkol 320-492-4151
Grace Martin 651-707-7751
Corrie McQuillan 320-296-1981
Shawn Neumann 218-296-2035
Eileen Schmidt 507-469-5951
Will Schroeder 320-424-2848
Dave Seipel 651-285-8321
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A Legacy Continues: McDonald Meats Enters Its Next Chapter



Hello to all,

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2026 MAMP Convention a success—and to all who attended. Your support and commitment to this industry continue to make this community stronger every year.

In the midst of the convention, between offering the prayer and stepping in as an auctioneer, I missed an announcement that means a great deal to me and my family. I'd like to take a moment now to share that news.

In December 2025, ownership of McDonald Meats was officially passed on to the next generation—Travis, Mandy, and Jennifer.

This moment represents far more than a business transaction. It marks the continuation of a legacy that began in 1914, when my grandfather opened a dry goods store. My father later carried that forward as a grocery store with a small meat counter. In 1989, I took the reins, transitioned away from groceries, and established what we know today as McDonald Meats.

Now, 112 years and four generations later, I could not be more proud to see Travis, Mandy, and Jennifer step into ownership. Their dedication, hard work, and passion for the business give me full confidence that the legacy will continue to grow and thrive. To Travis, Mandy, and Jennifer—congratulations. Your commitment to this family business means everything, and I am incredibly proud of what you have accomplished.

To everyone who has supported McDonald Meats over the years—customers, partners, and friends—thank you. You have all played a role in this journey. Together, we are better.

God bless,

Dave McDonald



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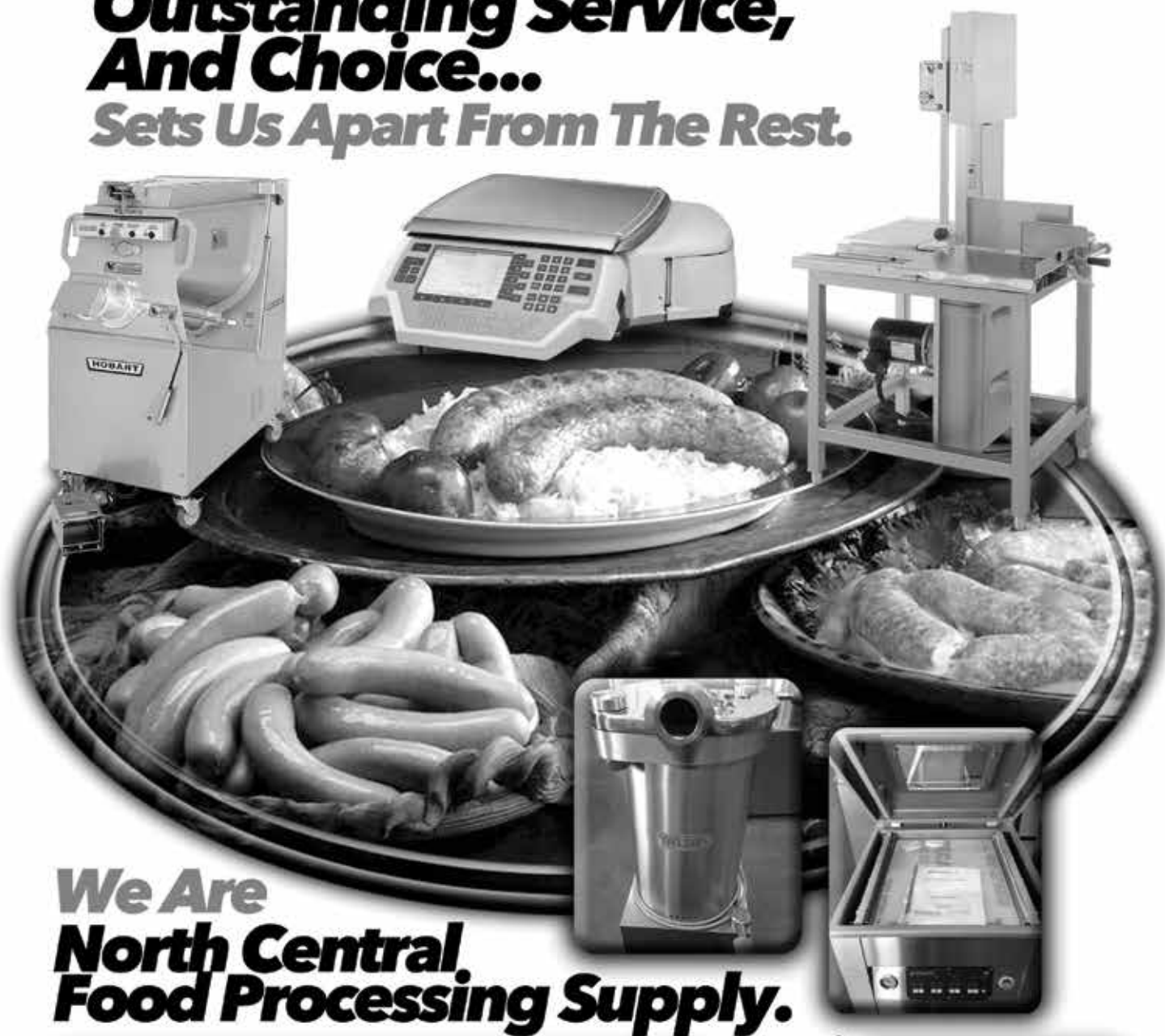
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Grilling Season!

FAST FACTS

75% of consumers plan to **MAINTAIN** their frequency of grilling this summer!

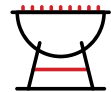
24% plan to **INCREASE** their frequency of grilling this summer!

America's GRILL Preference?

Gas/Propane **45%**



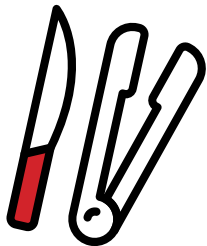
Charcoal/Kettle **39%**



Portable **23%**



What's **MOST IMPORTANT** when grilling?



- 1. TASTE**
- 2. EASE OF PREPARATION**
- 3. IF THE MEAL IS FAMILY FRIENDLY**



89% of consumers have concerns this grilling season. They are ...

- COST OF MEAT (53%)**
- OVERALL COST OF GROCERIES (48%)**
- COST OF PROPANE, WOOD PELLETS/CHIPS, ETC. (33%)**



Inflation-Driven Behavior Changes

- USE OF COUPONS/WEEKLY DEALS MORE OFTEN (40%)**
- LESS DINING OUT (39%)**
- BUY DIFFERENT OR LESS EXPENSIVE CUTS OF MEAT THAN NORMAL (37%)**

What's America GRILLING?

89%



Beef Burgers

74%



Beef Hot Dogs

66%



Beef Sausages/Brats

64%



Ribeye Steak

62%



Beef Ribs



TOP GRILLING OCCASIONS:

- July 4th (80% of households)**
- Memorial Day (75%)**
- Weekend Meal (73%)**
- Labor Day (70%)**

96%

of consumers plan to grill this summer

7

Average number of times per month consumers plan to grill

Buster Johnson

Buster Johnson (Waldemar Edward) was born on September 3, 1939 and left this world on March 17, 2026~ maybe because heaven needed his wonderful, infectious laugh and the light of such a beautiful spirit.

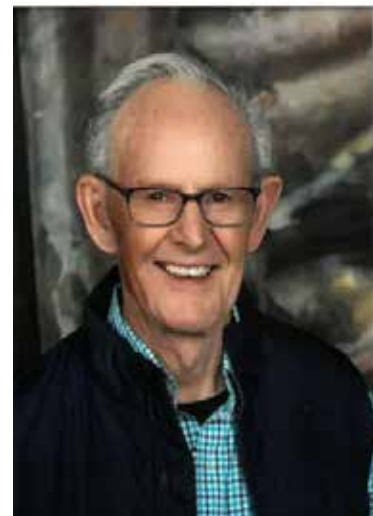
He was the son of Allen and Eunice (Hall) Johnson and grew up in a lively household which included not only his brothers and sisters, Nina Stockdale, Joyce Miller, Jerry, Phyllis Dietrich, James ("Chick") and Joe but also his Johnson grandparents and his Uncle Edward. Quite a few of them have already gotten a head start on welcoming him on the other side including his parents, several siblings, in-laws and loved ones---we're confident that, as any Johnson family reunion is, it was loud, opinionated and well attended.

In 1972 he met Annette Hugi, his most cherished and adored love. In 1974 they married and, with his 3 boys, Scott, Jay and Rusty, they started their lives together. Joshua and Luke were soon added to the crew and they built a life on a small farm south of Spring Valley. There, Buster did what he did best and what he loved: worked hard for his family, raised animals, farmed land, "fixed" (jerry-rigged) things and built lean-to's onto every building he could.

In February of 2026 Buster and Annette celebrated 52 years of marriage- -a journey shaped by overcoming the tough times, a busy home filled with boys and countless moments that required patience, laughter, love and enduring respect for one another. A love story for the ages.

Buster went to school in Spring Valley with the class of 1958 but took a short detour when he discovered working was more his style than the classroom. He worked for and lived with Bob and Marge Hahn in Preston who became his very dear second family and he graduated from Preston High School in 1959. That same year he proved he was tougher than he looked by becoming a Minnesota State Wrestling

Champ at 112 pounds- -small but mighty, a theme that carried through his life. He always considered Doug, Randy, Gary, Rob, Mary and Tom Hahn his siblings and they called him "the oldest brother".



He was always self motivated and able to identify opportunities, at age 10 Buster had a Grit Paper route; at 11 he began working at the Foodliner Grocery in Spring Valley. He was so short he had to stand on 2 pop cases to see over the meat counter- - an early sign that meat cutting was his calling. He spent years with Red Owl and Super Valu as a meat department manager before buying the Foodliner in 1968 and proudly renaming it Buster's AG Food Store (at the time there were 6 grocery stores in Spring Valley). Eventually his entrepreneurial mindset led him to build Buster's Custom Meats and Processing right on the farm in 1979. During the farm crisis of the 1980's Buster proved that creativity and stubborn determination go a long way as he expanded into catering and renamed the business Buster's Country Meats and Catering.

He was a strong supporter of the Minnesota Association of Meat Processors (MAMP) serving on the board for 12 years, 2 as VP and then 2 as President in 2004 and 2005. He and Annette were honored by MAMP for their achievements in the meat industry in 2012.

When his wife and children hosted "Buster's Bash" in 2011 to celebrate more than 6 decades in the meat and grocery business, over 600 people showed up. The crowd was proof of what everyone already knew: Buster had touched countless lives, lent a helping hand wherever he could, and kept a lot of

folks well fed. He retired shortly thereafter at 71, though slowing down was never really his style.

Buster served on the fire departments in Eldora, Iowa, Spring Valley and Ostrander, and was an EMT and first responder in the 1970s because, apparently, one demanding career wasn't enough. He gave generously to many fund raisers and causes including the Fire Department, the VFW Auxiliary, the Historical Society, the Food Shelf and volunteered wherever help was needed. He was deeply involved with high school FFA Meats Teams and partnered with the Mayo Clinic's anesthesia and transplant departments providing animal parts for science and research.

A proud and involved member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Ostrander since 1976, Buster served on the Church Council many times, including as president. The church community was always important to him, he was very much present and eager to serve, he happily cooked for church fundraisers and ice cream socials. However, even with his love of children, after a brief foray into teaching Sunday School he knew his talents lay elsewhere (the kids still really liked him a lot).

He had adventures beyond Minnesota including a 1998 trip to the Philippines where he taught meat cutting, sausage making and business management through Land O' Lakes Farmer to Farmer program, a highlight of his career, he remembered it with gratitude. He and Annette also did a mission trip to Ecuador in 2014 where Buster worked on a church, an orphanage and a women's shelter building or remodeling projects (but no lean-to's). It was a bucket list trip and was more than he imagined.

Known for his love of riding motorcycles, Buster's passion likely began in childhood when he served as the mascot for the Valley Blackhawks, an alcohol free motorcycle club. In 2007 Annette got her own bike and together they logged endless miles on the road. He also loved roller skating, horseback riding, traveling and spending time at the Preston cabin they built in 2000. Above all, he loved his grandkids and

they loved and adored their Grandpa Buster, especially the unforgettable, fun filled John Deere Gator rides at the farm, cabin and home.

Buster leaves behind his devoted wife, Annette; 5 sons Scott, Jay (Denise), Rusty (Bonnie), Joshua (Michele) and Luke (Colleen); 10 grandchildren Monte, Jayson, Justice, Cole, Meghan, Carter, Alex, Elsie and Mara; one great granddaughter, Keelinn; brother Joe (Grand Meadow); sister in law, Julie (Joe) Sanchez; brothers in law Leon (Denise) Hugi, Steven Hugi, Hugh (Roberta) Hugi and Jerry Miller; many precious nieces and nephews, lifelong cherished friends and the Hahns. Know that he loved you all. Also countless people whose lives he touched sometimes with advice, sometimes with food, sometimes just by showing up.

He worked hard, loved deeply, taught and gave of himself generously, lived fully and had lots and lots of fun.

After all, he WAS one-of-a-kind Buster Johnson!

He was preceded in death by his parents and parents in law; an infant grandson; his sisters, Nina, Joyce, Phyllis; brothers, Jerry and James; Nina and Phyllis's husbands, Don Stockdale and Roger Dieterich; Jerry and Joseph's wives, Fini and Carol; daughter-in-law Lori Johnson.

Buster supported the Historical Society, the VFW Auxiliary, Trinity Lutheran Church, the Fire Departments and the Food Shelf to name just a few. In lieu of flowers, please direct memorials to any of the above or one of your own choice.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 23, 2026, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Ostrander, Minnesota, with Pastor Hermann Bakker officiating. A visitation will be held from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Friday, May 22, 2026, at the church, visitation will continue for 1 hour prior to the service on Saturday.

Turning a Dream of Local Meat Processing into Reality



Years ago, Paul Benson sat down with his two sons for a conversation that would ultimately reshape not only his family's future but the future of his hometown.

A lifelong cattle producer in Waubun, Minnesota, Benson had built a small butcher operation in Mahnomen County, located on the White Earth Indian Reservation in the northwest corner of the state. The county is one of Minnesota's poorest and is considered a food desert, with limited access to fresh foods and a shortage of high-paying jobs.

"I told my sons there really weren't opportunities for small beef producers here," Benson recalls. "I encouraged them to look elsewhere. I didn't want them to get stuck."

But the weight of that conversation lingered. Instead of accepting decline as inevitable, Benson began asking a different question: What would it take to create opportunity here?

FROM IDEA TO INITIATIVE

In 2017, Benson and his friend Doyle Turner approached the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to explore funding for expanding their family farm's butcher operation. They learned \$10,000 was available for a feasibility study—if they could match it. The White Earth Nation stepped in with matching funds, giving the project momentum.

The feasibility study confirmed what Benson already believed: there was room—and need—for local meat processing capacity. The pair hired a design firm and worked with their accountant to develop a business plan. They pursued additional grants and worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to identify an accessible location near both livestock producers and convenient traffic corridors.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Progress stalled. In September 2021, Turner died from complications related to COVID-19.

"I thought that was the end of it," Benson says. "The money had dried up, and without Doyle, it felt like we had taken it as far as we could."

A SECOND WIND

Nearly a year later, Benson's sister, Mary Metelak, and her husband, Stew, stepped in and agreed to serve as co-owners. Metelak quickly focused on a pivotal opportunity: a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that could revive the project.

To strengthen the application, she turned to AURI. Harold Stanislawski, AURI's business and industry development director, worked closely with the team to refine the proposal.

"That grant application process was incredibly in-depth," Metelak says. "AURI helped answer tough questions, which led to a successful application. Harold's expertise was invaluable."

Their efforts paid off. The project was awarded nearly \$1 million in USDA funding. Bremer Bank provided additional financing, construction began in 2023, and in 2024, Benson + Turner Foods, Inc., officially opened its doors.

A NEW MODEL FOR RURAL MEAT PROCESSING

The 8,000-square-foot USDA-inspected facility now employs 21 full- and part-time workers and contributes an estimated \$4 million annually to the local economy.

USDA inspection status allows the plant to sell products across state lines—critical for market access. But Benson + Turner Foods operates differently from large-scale commodity processors.



What is Benchmarking?

Benchmarking is a confidential, data-driven tool that helps meat processors compare their business performance with peers across Minnesota and beyond. For a limited time, AURI is offering this tool free of charge.

With clear, easy-to-read reports, you'll see how your plant performs in:

- Labor efficiency
- Utility and overhead costs
- Yield and throughput
- Profit margins

How to Enroll

CALL OR EMAIL CONNIE LINDSTROM:
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"Everything we sell comes through our door alive and from local producers," Benson says. "We're not moving pallets of boxed beef. We have to build a market for every cut. That's challenging—but it's also our strength."

Approximately 40 percent of production goes toward retail and wholesale products, with the remainder custom processing. The company sources livestock from about 15 local producers and assists farmers in developing labels to support direct marketing. Beyond processing, the facility includes a retail market and a classroom for workforce training and community education. A commercial kitchen and canning space are under construction. Federal and state partners see the facility as a proof point. Representatives from both the USDA and the MDA have been enthusiastic supporters throughout the lifecycle, Benson says.

"They've told us our job is to help rebuild innovation in meat processing—something this country has lost—and demonstrate this model works," Benson says. "We're doing our best to prove them right."

ONGOING PARTNERSHIP WITH AURI

Since opening, AURI has continued supporting Benson + Turner Foods with staff training, food safety assistance, and technical expertise.

The business is also participating in AURI's Benchmarking Service (see sidebar for more information), a data-driven tool that allows processors to compare performance metrics—such as labor efficiency, yield, margins, utilities, and overhead—against peers across Minnesota and the U.S.

"AURI has helped us think more analytically about our business," Metelak says. "They've shown us where we can stretch our dollars and improve efficiency. I can't say enough good things about their support."

Stanislawski notes that the project faced numerous moments when it could have collapsed.

"Economic development like this is not for the faint of heart," he says. "But local meat processing is foundational to rural economies. A plant like Benson + Turner Foods supports livestock producers while also generating secondary benefits for retailers, consumers, and the broader community."

KEEPING THE VALUE LOCAL

Today, Benson and Metelak are focused on strengthening regional markets for local beef and pork. They are advocating for policies and purchasing practices that prioritize local sourcing—encouraging institutions such as food shelves and senior care centers to buy from area producers—so that food dollars remain in the community. They are also working with local school districts and food distribution organizations through the White Earth Tribe to further expand markets for their products.

"We're learning as we go," Metelak says. "But we can already see the impact. One of my priorities is to continue to work hard on building awareness to keep the momentum going on the benefits of local sourcing."

For Benson, the greatest impact is generational. It has been years since he told his sons to look elsewhere for opportunity. Now, he sees young producers launching their own labels, building customer bases, and staying in Mahnomon County. Staying home is not easy, but it is now possible.

"We have young farmers who can start a business, market their own products, and support their families," Benson says. "That's the biggest win. Local sourcing isn't just a slogan—it's economic development in real time. Now we have to keep it going."

THE RELIABLE COLLECTION EXPERT OF AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY BY-PRODUCTS SINCE 1881



For over 140 years, Sanimax's facilities in South St. Paul, Green Bay, and DeForest have been reclaiming by-products from the meat processing industry and returning them as value-added ingredients that can be used in many industries ranging from livestock feed to pharmaceutical development. Whether you're a butcher shop, slaughterhouse, supermarket, or food processor, we offer sanitary collection services tailored to your specific needs.

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AGRI VALUE-ADDED and MEAT, POULTRY, EGG, AND MILK PROCESSING (MPEM) GRANT PROGRAMS

The AGRI Value-Added Grant offers designated grants for value-added businesses to invest in equipment. The program is intended to increase the sales of Minnesota agricultural products by investing in production capacity, market diversification, and market access for value-added products. For the purposes of this grant, “Value-added” is defined as the addition of value to an agricultural product through processing.

The MPEM Grant offers designated grants to facilitate the start-up, modernization, or expansion of meat, poultry, egg, and milk processing businesses. The intent of the program is to increase sales of Minnesota-raised livestock products by investing in equipment and physical improvements that support processing, capacity, market diversification, and market access.

Eligibility and Funding Priorities

Individuals, farmers, businesses, agricultural cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, local government, and tribal government entities are eligible to apply. The Value-Added Grant will prioritize projects that increase food safety or increase hemp fiber production capacity. The MPEM Grant will prioritize projects that create additional meat or poultry slaughter and processing capacity, increase access to kosher or halal markets, or contribute to a food safety plan or increase food safety.

Amount Available

We expect to award up to \$2.25 million through the AGRI Value-Added and AGRI MPEM Grants. This grant requires a cash match. You are responsible for 50% of the first \$50,000 to receive up to \$25,000 reimbursement. For costs after the first \$50,000, you are responsible for 75% of the total remaining cost to receive 25% reimbursement, up to a maximum grant award of \$150,000.

Applying

We will accept applications until **4:00 pm Central Time on Wednesday, June 17, 2026**.

Carefully read the full Request for Proposals (PDF) for eligibility and requirements; then apply online: <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/business-dev-loans-grants/agri-value-added-grant-program>

For additional information, please contact:

Maya Benedict
Ag Marketing & Development
[651-201-6098](tel:651-201-6098)
Maya.Benedict@state.mn.us

Grants Line
Ag Marketing & Development
[651-201-6500](tel:651-201-6500)

About the Minnesota Grown Program

Supporting farmers. Nourishing communities. Growing Minnesota.

A majority of Minnesotans say supporting local farmers and buying food and farm products grown here is important to them. Across the state, farmers meet that demand by selling local products directly to consumers, schools, retailers, and restaurants. Their work feeds communities, creates jobs, and supports the vitality of local economies.

Minnesota Grown, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's statewide branding and marketing program, helps make these connections possible. For more than 40 years, it has provided a trusted way for Minnesotans to find local food and farm products and helped producers reach customers and grow sales in a competitive marketplace.

Growing Demand

Producer participation in the program has reached record levels in recent years, engaging a new generation of farmers while continuing to serve long-time members. Consumer interest is rising as well, with traffic to the Minnesota Grown Directory reaching record levels in 2025.

Minnesota Grown's state appropriation remains \$186,000 per year—the same amount appropriated in 2007—even as participation has grown by more than 40% over that period.

Why the Program Matters

While consumer interest is strong, shoppers need help finding local products and farmers need visibility to compete. Local producers and producer associations often lack the resources to execute impactful marketing campaigns. Minnesota Grown addresses these needs through coordinated statewide marketing. The program:

- Licenses the Minnesota Grown label, creating a clear and trusted way to identify locally grown products.
- Operates the Minnesota Grown Directory, connecting consumers and wholesale buyers with local producers.
- Conducts coordinated statewide marketing campaigns that build awareness and educate consumers about Minnesota Grown products.
- Provides branding materials, cost-shares, and practical marketing support that helps producers compete, grow sales, and adapt to evolving market expectations.

Proven Statewide Results

- 1,400 farms, farmers' markets, and businesses across the state participate in the program.
- 400,000+ people used the Minnesota Grown Directory in 2025 to find local food and farm products.
- Statewide marketing efforts generate 12+ million consumer impressions each year.
- Surveys show strong consumer recognition and trust in the Minnesota Grown brand, as well as positive impact on purchasing decisions.
- 90%+ of participating producers say the program is a valuable marketing resource for their business.

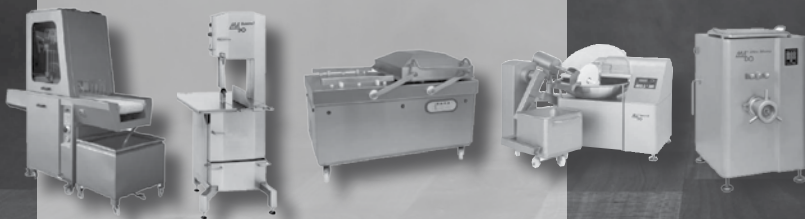
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Meat Science &
Animal Biologics Discovery
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Artisanal Meat Processing Workshop

June 9-11, 2026

This brand-new workshop takes a comprehensive approach to “old world” meat products. The course will explore traditional production of historically important processed meat products, while marrying it with modern manufacturing technologies and current food safety requirements. Participants will learn about the science, safety, and production of an array of “heritage” products ranging from fresh sausages, cooked & emulsified sausages, dry & semi-dry sausages, dry-cured whole muscle products, liver & scalded sausages, and many more.

Instructors (including award-winning sausage makers) will work alongside experts from industry and academia to share their knowledge about these historically significant and unique products. A blend of classroom discussion and significant interactive manufacturing demonstrations held in the Meat Science & Animal Biologics Discovery USDA pilot plant will provide a strong understanding of science, technology, and food safety. Product sampling, evaluation, and discussions will complement classroom presentations and plant manufacturing demonstrations, including a unique “Old World Wurst” evening.

Meat processors, chefs, and individuals with a culinary arts focus at any level of experience can benefit from this program. The workshop’s content will be targeted toward those interested in or currently involved in manufacturing “old world” products, as well as those tasked with innovational research & development responsibilities. This course will provide a comprehensive education on artisanal meat processing for attendees with diverse backgrounds, needs, and interests.

Topics Covered

- Basic Meat Science
- Non-Meat Ingredients
- Raw Materials and Their Functionality
- Sausage Casings
- Cooking & Smoking
- Equipment for Artisanal Product Manufacture
- History of Heritage Meat Processing
- Artisanal Fresh Sausages (+ Demo)
- Artisanal Emulsified Sausages (+ Demo)
- Artisanal Cooked Sausages (+ Demo)
- Artisanal Dry- & Semi-Dry Sausages (+ Demo)
- Artisanal Dry-cured products (+ Demo)
- Artisanal Liver & Scalded Sausages (+ Demo)
- Artisanal Meat Processing Food Safety
- Artisanal Meat Product Markets & Marketing

[REGISTER HERE](#)

- Members of state affiliate organizations qualify for the **discounted rate of \$650**.
 - After registration, **within 2 business days** please email Ky Peters (kpeters26@wisc.edu) either 1. **proof of your membership to your organization** or 2. **the contact information of your organization for verification**.
- For non-state affiliates, the cost of this course is **\$1,450**.
- Late registration begins **5/19/2026** (Late State Affiliate = \$750; Late Non-State Affiliate = \$1550)
- Registration closes **5/26/2026**



UW-Madison Meat Science



meatsciences.cals.wisc.edu/short-courses-workshops

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BEEF BACKER AWARD ★ 2026 ★

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BEEF
COUNCIL

The Minnesota Beef Council is proud to recognize
ST. JOSEPH MEAT MARKET

as a 2026 Beef Backer Award recipient. This award was presented at the Minnesota Association of Meat Processors (MAMP) Convention in recognition of their outstanding support of Minnesota's beef industry.



THANK YOU, ST. JOSEPH MEAT MARKET,
for your commitment to quality, your customers,
and Minnesota's beef producers!

The Beef Backer Award honors businesses that go above and beyond in supporting the beef industry and its producers.

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Same passion for meat.*



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Better Together.
Silly Together.*

THANK YOU to all of our Past Presidents
for your leadership, dedication, and for keeping things *fun* along the way!

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STRONG FUTURE.
ONE MAMP.**



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**FRIENDSHIPS
THAT LAST.**



**MEMORIES
WE'LL NEVER FORGET.**

2026 MAMP PRODUCT SHOW AWARDS

1 = Grand Champion, 2 = Reserve Grand Champion, 3 = Champion, 4 = Reserve Champion

Cooked, Non-Fermented Summer



1. Stokke's Meats
2. St. Joseph Meat Market
3. Greg's Meat Processing
4. Schneider Custom Meats

Specialty Whole Muscle Jerky



1. Von Hanson's Meats - Garlic Cracked Pepper
2. Waseca Morgan's Meat Market - BBQ
3. St. Joseph Meat Market - Raspberry Jalapeno Turkey Jerky
4. Double D's Custom Processing - Wango Tango

Jerky



1. Waseca Morgan's Meat Market
2. Dehmer's Meats
3. B&E Meats
4. Grand Champion Meats

Ground & Formed Jerky



1. Schmidt's Meat Market
2. Schneider Custom Meats
3. V&M Locker
4. Miltona Custom Meats

2026 MAMP PRODUCT SHOW AWARDS

1 = Grand Champion, 2 = Reserve Grand Champion, 3 = Champion, 4 = Reserve Champion

Prepared Food Item



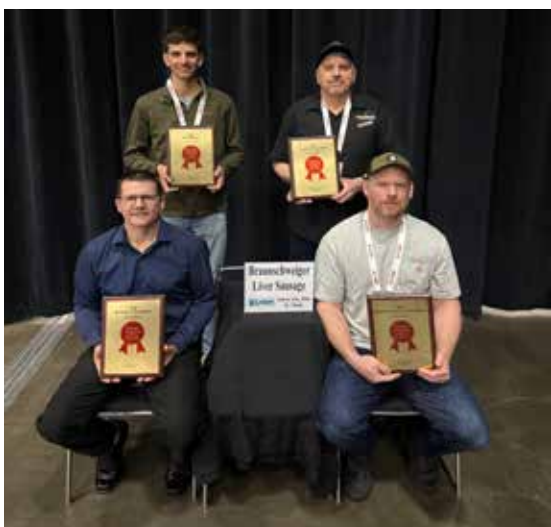
1. Miltona Custom Meats
2. McDonald's Meats
3. Petty Brother's Meats
4. V&M Locker

Snack Sticks



1. Schneider's Custom Meats
2. Ellsworth Locker
3. Grand Champion Meats
4. Von Hanson's Meats

Braunschweiger



1. McDonald's Meats
2. Ellsworth Locker
3. Lakes Processing
4. Benson & Turner Foods

Specialty Snack Sticks w/ Inclusions



1. Waseca Morgan's Meat Market - Cheddar
2. Stokke's Meats - Italian Pepperjack
3. Ellsworth Locker - Philly Cheese
4. Neighbor's Meats - Italian

2026 MAMP PRODUCT SHOW AWARDS

1 = Grand Champion, 2 = Reserve Grand Champion, 3 = Champion, 4 = Reserve Champion

Whole Bone-in Ham



1. Ellsworth Locker
2. Petty Brother's Meats
3. Ody's Country Meats
4. Schneider Custom Meats

Specialty Bacon



1. B&E Meats - Minnesota BBQ
2. Jenniges Meat Processing - Hungarian
3. Stokke's Meats - Whiskey Peppercorn
4. North Fork Custom Meats - Porketta

Bacon



1. Grand Champion Meats
2. Petty Brother's Meats
3. North Fork Custom Meats
4. Greg's Meat Processing

Dried Beef



1. McDonald's Meats
2. Dehmer's Meats
3. Ody's Country Meats
4. V&M Locker

2026 MAMP PRODUCT SHOW AWARDS

1 = Grand Champion, 2 = Reserve Grand Champion, 3 = Champion, 4 = Reserve Champion

Smoked Poultry Whole Muscle Item



1. Dehmer's Meats
2. McDonald's Meats
3. Petty Brother's Meats
4. Lakes Processing

Cooked Summer Sausage



1. Waseca Morgan's Meat Market
2. Greg's Meats
3. McDonald's Meats
4. Petty Brother's Meats

Cooked & Smoked Pork



1. Dehmer's Meats - Pecan Canadian Bacon
2. Bemidji Downtown Meats - Garlic Pepper Salted & Smoked Pork Jowls
3. V&M Locker - Cottage Bacon
4. North Fork Custom Meats - Canadian Bacon

Specialty Summer Sausage



1. Petty Brother's Meats - Jalapeno Cheddar
2. Lakes Processing - Sweet Honey w/ Toasted Almonds
3. Grand Champion Meats - Jalapeno Cheddar Pepperjack
4. Dehmer's Meats - Southwest Jack



2026 MAMP CONVENTION RECAP

.....

See you next year!

.....

MARCH 18-20, 2027





MAMP
MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF MEAT PROCESSORS



2026 Top Awards

BEST OF SHOW

Dehmer's Meat Market
St. Michael, MN

SWEEPSTAKES

Petty Brother's Meats
&
Dehmer's Meat Market

KIDS CHOICE HOTDOG

V & M Locker
Leota, MN



Congratulations!!



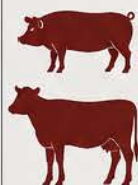
1ST ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL MEAT CUTTING CONTEST

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2026 • ST. CLOUD, MN

The Minnesota Association of Meat Processors (MAMP) was proud to host the **1st Annual High School Meat Cutting Contest** at this year's convention in St. Cloud, MN.

Six talented teams from across the state put their skills to the test, showcasing the next generation of meat cutting professionals!

THE CHALLENGE



Teams were challenged to break down:

- 1 whole bone-in pork loin
- 1 whole beef clod

Each team then fabricated the products into a variety of retail cuts and displayed them on trays as if they were going into a retail display case.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

A special thank you to our generous sponsors for their support of this inaugural contest!



Thank you, Pac Knife Sales, for donating high-quality knives for our top three winning teams!



Thank you, Dacotah Paper, for donating supplies onsite to help make this contest a success!



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNING TEAMS!

1ST PLACE MEDFORD



2ND PLACE ROYALTON



3RD PLACE ROCORI



THANK YOU!

We extend a huge thank you to everyone who helped make this first annual contest a success!

- To our mentors: Jess Fierabend and Tyler Ehrmantraut from Central Lakes College
- To our judges: Heather DeLong with MN Beef, Pam Voelkel with MN Pork, and Jon Christensen with 2nd Ave Sausage Company
- To our volunteers, sponsors, and supporters
- To the students and advisors who prepared, competed, and represented their schools with professionalism and pride

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS BUILD THE FUTURE OF OUR INDUSTRY!



SIX TEAMS. ONE CHALLENGE.

*A bright future for
our industry!*

We are proud of all six teams who participated and can't wait to see this contest continue to grow!

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THIS FIRST CONTEST A HUGE SUCCESS!

See you next year!



2026 MAMP CONVENTION RECAP

.....

See you next year!

.....

MARCH 18-20, 2027



2026 MAMP PRODUCT SHOW AWARDS

1 = Grand Champion, 2 = Reserve Grand Champion, 3 = Champion, 4 = Reserve Champion

Flavored Snack Sticks



1. Petty Brother's Meats - Honey BBQ
2. Von Hanson's Meats - Teriyaki
3. Dehmer's Meats - Sweet & Sassy
4. Schmidt's Meat Market - Honey BBQ

Small Diameter Sausage – Fully Cooked



1. Dehmer's Meats
2. St. Joseph Meat Market
3. Callahan Meats
4. Petty Brother's Meats

Ring Bologna



1. B&E Meats
2. McDonald's Meats
3. St. Joseph Meat Market
4. Dehmer's Meats

Specialty Small Diameter – Fully Cooked



1. Von Hanson's Meats - Swedish Potato Sausage
2. Lakes Processing - Lumberjack
3. McDonald's Meats - Smoked Cheddar Bacon Brat
4. Ellsworth Locker - Skinless Chili Cheese Dog

2026 MAMP PRODUCT SHOW AWARDS

1 = Grand Champion, 2 = Reserve Grand Champion, 3 = Champion, 4 = Reserve Champion

Fresh Specialty Small Diameter Sausage



1. St. Joseph Meat Market - Jalapeno Beer Cheese
2. Petty Brother's Meats - Backyard BBQ Brat
3. Ellsworth Locker - Loaded Spud Brat
4. Lakes Processing - Apple Cheddar Breakfast Brat

Wieners



1. Dehmer's Meats
2. McDonald's Meats
3. Von Hanson's Meats
4. Greg's Meat Market

Fresh Pork Sausage



1. The Butchery of Maple Lake
2. Waseca Morgan's Meat Market
3. Grand Champion Meats
4. Miltona Custom Meats

Wild Rice Sausage



1. Miltona Custom Meats
2. Von Hanson's
3. Petty Brother's Meats
4. Schneider Custom Meats

2026 MAMP PRODUCT SHOW AWARDS

1 = Grand Champion, 2 = Reserve Grand Champion, 3 = Champion, 4 = Reserve Champion

Cooked Poultry Product



1. North Fork Custom Meats
2. Miliona Custom Meats
3. Petty Brother's Meats
4. Dehmer's Meats

MN Grown



1. Waseca Morgan's Meats
2. Grand Champion Meats
3. McDonald's Meats
4. Jenniges Meat Processing

Open Class – Blue Ribbons



- Schneider Custom Meats
- Jenniges Meat Processing
- Waseca Morgan's Meat Market
- V&M Locker
- McDonald's Meats
- St. Joseph Meat Market
- Petty Brother's Meats
- Stokke's Meats
- Lakes Processing
- Grand Champion Meats

Open Class – Red Ribbons



- Grand Champion Meats
- Petty Brother's Meats
- Central Lakes College

2026 MAMP PRODUCT SHOW AWARDS

1 = Grand Champion, 2 = Reserve Grand Champion, 3 = Champion, 4 = Reserve Champion

Open Class - White Ribbons



- McDonald's Meats
- Central Lakes College

Innovative Beef



- Ground: McDonald's Meats - Four Cheese Burger Patty
- Processed: McDonald's Meats - Skinless Chili Cheese Beef Frankfurter
- Steaks & Roasts: McDonald's Meats - Beef Bacon

Innovative Pork



1. Ellsworth Locker - Loaded Breakfast Patty
2. St. Joseph Meat Market - Jalapeno Beer Cheese Pork Patty
3. Stokke's Meat Market - Minnesota Sushi Brat

Innovative Turkey



1. Grand Champion Meats - Apricot & Pecan Turkey
2. Grand Champion Meats - Mango Cajun Turkey Roll
3. St. Joseph Meat Market - Smoked Turkey Jalapeno Popper Brat



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BOTTLENECK PROJECT

Supporting Minnesota's Meat Processors. Today and for the Long Term.

The MFU Bottleneck Project is working alongside small- and medium-sized meat processors across the state to strengthen local food systems and tackle the challenges facing the industry.

What can we offer to your business?

- Assistance finding resources for expansion or workforce attraction, training, and retention
- Connections to interested job and apprenticeship candidates
- Industry-driven research addressing staffing, capacity, and regulatory hurdles
- Advocacy for processor-led solutions

Our goal is simple: **resilient, regional meat processing systems** that support processors, family farms, and local communities.

If you haven't heard from us already, we'd love to connect!

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What is Benchmarking?

Benchmarking is a confidential, data-driven tool that helps meat processors compare their business performance with peers across Minnesota and beyond.

Why Now?

AURI is using funds provided by the State of Minnesota to cover the cost of subscription to Christianson LLP's Meat Processing Benchmarking Service for up to 26 Minnesota-based meat processors. As an additional incentive to participate to help offset the cost of reporting data, AURI will pay each subscriber \$300 once they provide Christianson with the required financial and operational information.

The first 26 to sign up
get free subscriptions to the
benchmarking service
(a \$600 value)

And a \$300 stipend for
completing the submission
of financial and operational
data to Christianson LLP



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- Utility and overhead costs
- Yield and throughput
- Profit margins

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2

MAKE SMARTER DECISIONS

Use trusted industry data to guide equipment purchases, staffing, and planning.

3

STAY COMPETITIVE

Adopt best practices to improve profitability and long-term sustainability. Small improvements can make a big difference in a tight-margin industry.

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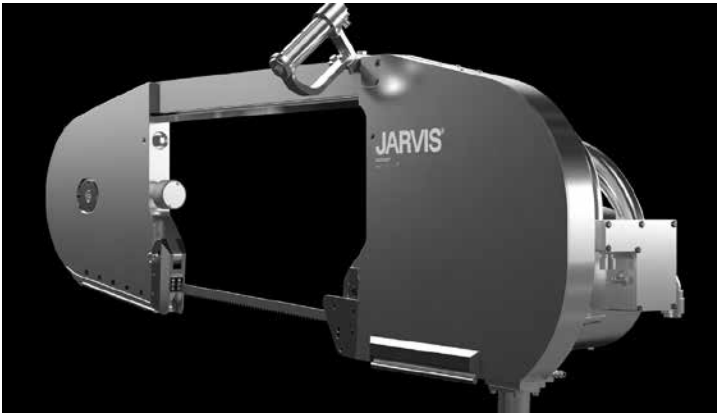
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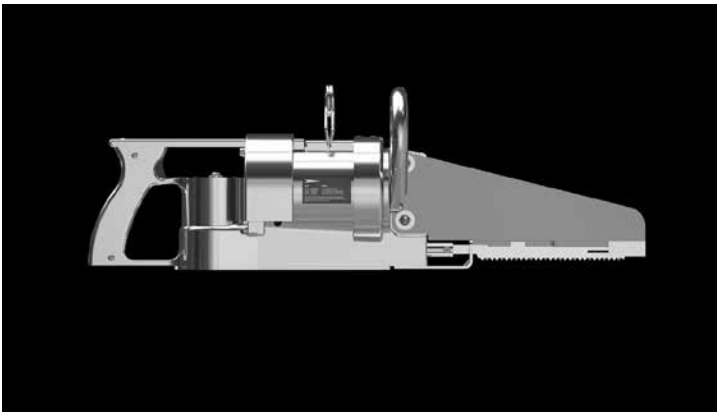
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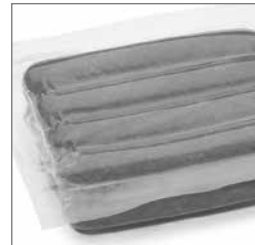
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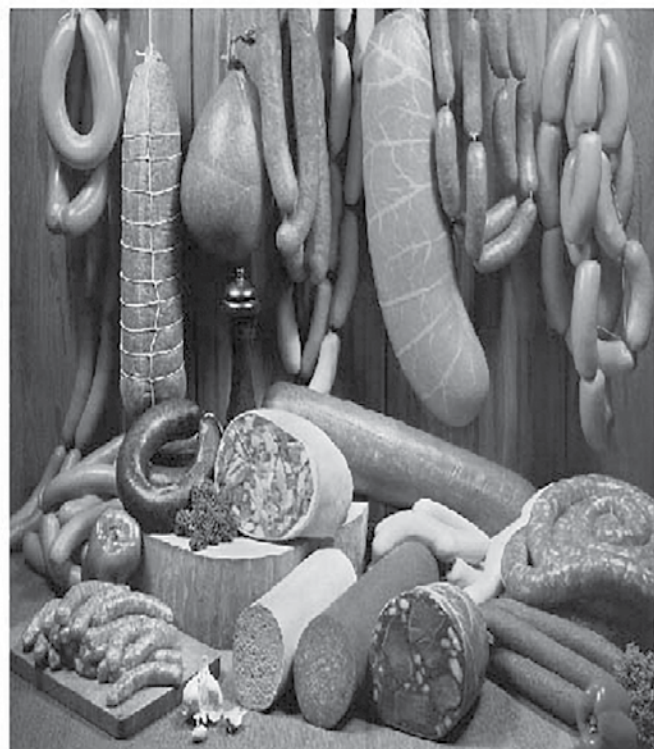
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Apple Valley, MN
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Steve Schneider - 2029
Schneider Custom Meats
Askov, MN
320-838-3669

SUPPLIER DIRECTORS

Tony Lindgren - 2029
Nassau Foods
Brooklyn Park, MN
763-482-1585

Nathanael Denton - 2027
Kerres USA
715-393-5133

TECHNICAL ADVISOR

Dr. Ryan Cox
U of M Ext Meat Specialist
St. Paul, MN
(612) 624-6615

Chris Gohmann
Gohmann Supply
23784 67th Ave. So.
St. Cloud, MN 56301
(320) 250-6969

Levi Muhl
MDA Meat Program Mgr.
St. Paul, MN
651-201-6216

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Kelly Schmidt
MN Beef Council
406-599-2395

Pam Voelkel
MN Pork Board
Mankato, MN
507-345-8814

Upcoming Events

MAMP BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, May 20, 2026 | 11am
South St. Paul, Cloud, MN

AAMP ANNUAL CONVENTION

July 9-11, 2026 | Milwaukee, WI

MAMP FALL TOUR

September 10, 2026 | Owatonna, MN

MAMP PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOP

March 18th, 2027 | Location TBD

2027 MAMP CONVENTION

March 18-20, 2027 | St. Cloud, MN



MAMP
MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF MEAT PROCESSORS