

Local Girl Scout troop and Dairy Pilot Plant collaborate to make new ice cream flavors at UW-River Falls

April 28, 2017--Girl Scout cookie time is practically a national pastime. Young girls with their boxes of Thin Mints™ and Caramel deLites™ are instantly recognizable and the most enterprising scouts are often posted up outside of local businesses, selling their wares.

Of the 112 councils in the United States, the Girl Scout River Valleys council ranks in the top five for Girl Scout cookie sales - thanks in part to a significant contribution from a local scout. That scout and her troop brought their cookies to the campus of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls this spring and teamed up with the Dairy Pilot Plant to create an entirely new sweet treat.

Local Girl Scout Genevieve Kerr and her mother visited the Falcon Foods Store at UW-River Falls in the spring of 2016. Curious about the decision-making process behind choosing ice cream flavors, Kerr inquired with the student worker on duty. That student referred her to Michelle Farner, dairy pilot plant manager at UW-River Falls. Kerr wondered if Falcon Foods would be interested in creating an ice cream with Girl Scout cookies and, along with her mother, paid Farner a visit.

A knock on Farner's door led to an invitation into her office and an enthusiastic conversation about a potential Girl Scout collaboration. Farner explained that she and the UW-River Falls students who work in the Dairy Pilot Plant producing ice cream and other foods are continually interested in experimenting with new flavors of ice cream. The conversation led Farner to purchase cookies - 12 dozen boxes to be exact - consisting of the Thin Mints™, Caramel deLites™, and Lemonades™ varieties.

The partnership led to the creation of three new ice cream flavors last spring. Scouts Arctic Trail was borne from Thin Mints™, while Dulce Delight sprung from Caramel deLites™, and Strawberry Lemonade Crunch was a product of Lemonades™ cookies.

Fast forward to spring 2017 and Kerr once again approached Farner with a cookie order form. She convinced Farner that the existing S'Mores flavored ice cream produced by the plant could be elevated with some Girl Scout cookies. Kerr felt the ice cream could use some crunch and persuaded Farner to add Girl Scout S'mores™ cookies to her order.

A grand total of more than 330 boxes of Girl Scout cookies were delivered to the Dairy Pilot Plant this year and when Kerr brought the goods to campus, Farner extended an invitation to Kerr's troop for a plant visit.

River Valley Troop 56157 eagerly accepted Farner's invite and paid a visit to the UW-River Falls Dairy Pilot Plant last month on a mission to earn a troop-designed badge. The badge, which centered around careers in the food industry, would be earned after the troop "assisted" in the ice cream making process.

The scout troop arrived on campus, and after donning hairnets provided by Freddy Falcon (the campus mascot), the girls helped make a batch of Strawberry Lemonade Crunch ice cream. That particular flavor proved to be a favorite at last summer's River Falls Farmers Market and at the Summer Concert Series on Tuesday evenings at the Amphitheatre, according to Farner. The two venues will again offer UWRF ice cream over the summer. Select flavors are also available for purchase in Freddy's C-Store inside the University Center.

Following the ice cream making process, Farner spoke with the troop about the Dairy Pilot Plant and the food industry, while several UW-River Falls students discussed career plans and options with the scouts. After the presentation, the troop was treated to a taste test of the Strawberry Lemonade Crunch ice cream that they had just helped create.

Farner and the students also fielded questions from the curious scouts, ranging from queries about the future of food production, plant machinery, and management within the plant system.

Farner was encouraged by Kerr's entrepreneurial spirit and appreciates the influence UW-River Falls can have on young students. By expanding the visit to include a presentation and career conversations, the university was able to expand the girl scouts' horizons while highlighting the technology and resources UW-River Falls has to offer.

"Genevieve was thinking outside the box to approach me and offer to sell cookies for Falcon Food's ice cream. We (UWRF) are fortunate to be in a position to encourage girls in science while embracing their entrepreneurial spirit," explained Farner.

The Dairy Pilot Plant offers 22 different ice cream flavors as well as seasonal flavors.

The Girl Scout cookie ice cream options are for sale in the Falcon Foods Store on campus and will be available while supplies last. The store is located in 149 Food Science Addition and operating hours are Thursdays from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. and Fridays from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. through mid-May. More information can be found at <https://www.uwrf.edu/ANFS/FalconFoods/>.

For more information, contact Falcon Foods at falconfoods@uwrf.edu or 715-425-3702.

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Photo: River Valley Girl Scout Troop 56157 recently joined UW-River Falls student workers and Freddy Falcon in the Dairy Pilot Plant on campus to help make ice cream

flavored with Girl Scout cookies. The collaboration came about after Girl Scout Genevieve Kerr (looking over the shoulder of the scout holding the ice cream tub) inquired about how ice cream flavors were decided upon following a visit with her mother to the Falcon Foods Store last spring. Photo by Hailey Smith, UWRF media intern.

Falcon Foods

Falcon Foods are produced by UW-River Falls students in the university plants that have been in operation since 1983. Students work under the direction of a full-time plant manager and produce a variety of products including cheese, ice cream and meats, which are available for purchase in the Falcon Foods Store on campus. The plant provides valuable learning experiences for students to take with them and put to use in their future careers. Students are involved in all aspects of production, sanitation and quality control. The dairy plant uses raw milk from the UW-River Falls Mann Valley Farm and is primarily self-supporting. The meat plant receives raw product from the UW-River Falls laboratory farm and local farmers.

Girls Scouts River Valleys

In partnership with 9,000 committed volunteers and adult members, Girl Scouts River Valleys serves more than 30,000 girls through a 49-county council that spans Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa.