



HOME

AND *he*

■ Lexington's Crank & Boom has made over 60 flavors of ice cream, including Bourbon and Honey, Kentucky Blackberry & Buttermilk, Coconut, and Fresh Strawberry. Photo: Sarah Jane Sanders

The background of the entire page is a top-down view of three glass jars filled with ice cream. The jar on the left contains pink ice cream with swirls. The middle jar contains orange ice cream. The jar on the right contains white ice cream with chunks of red and purple fruit. The jars are set on a light-colored surface with dark brown and blue speckles.

# GROWN

# *avenly*

## Local beginnings sprout into "proud" businesses

BY ROBIN ROENKER

From ice cream and summer sausage to jams, jellies, popcorn, and more, an increasing array of local, Kentucky-produced foods are making their way into mainstream retailers, thanks to the support of the Kentucky Proud marketing program.

The six Kentucky Proud companies profiled here have found success in using homegrown, Kentucky ingredients from local Kentucky farmers whenever possible. Their stories prove it's deliciously easy to enjoy Kentucky-made foods, whatever you're craving.

■ Crank & Boom's featured S'Mores Sundae is made with vanilla bean ice cream, homemade chocolate bombe sauce and marshmallows, and graham crumbs. Photo: Sarah Jane Sanders



## Crank & Boom Ice Cream

www.crankandboom.com  
info@crankandboom.com  
(859) 288-2176

Lexington-based Crank & Boom ice cream may be the only ice cream brand ever to be born in a Thai restaurant. In 2011, owner Toa Green was looking for a dessert to add to the menu at her Thai Orchid Café and settled on Thai coconut ice cream. It was such a smash, the restaurant soon added other flavors. When customers started coming in to order the ice cream and nothing else, Green knew she had a hit.

"We'd had the restaurant for five years, and suddenly people were coming in for this ice cream that had only been around for six months," Green says. "And my husband and I thought, 'What if we did ice cream on the side, just for fun?'"

Since its official launch in 2013, their ice cream business, like the brand's name, has been booming—so much so that Green and her husband, Mike, have shuttered their Thai restaurant to devote full attention to expanding Crank & Boom. The company sources its ice cream base, made only of basic, pronounceable ingredients like milk and cream, from JD Country Milk, members of Pennyrile Electric. Run by the Schrock family of Russellville, the farm's cows are raised without hormones or antibiotics.

Crank & Boom opened its first Lexington retail location last June, with a second site in the works. Currently, Crank & Boom is sold at roughly 40 retail locations across the state.

For Green, ice cream offers "a fun canvas to be creative and come up with fun flavor combinations," she says. Whenever possible, Green sources her ingredients from Kentucky growers: strawberries from Boyd Orchards in Versailles, honey from Hosey Honey in Midway, and beer from Lexington's Ethereal Brewing, to name a few.

"We try to build good relationships with our farmers and producers," says Green. "What I'm trying to do is build a value-added system from the farmer all the way to the customer. We want to make sure the farmer gets a good price, and they can make a good living from selling to us. And we hope that our customers understand that we are making a premium product, and they hopefully see value in that. I hope they see that when they purchase our products that they are not only buying ice cream, they are making a significant impact on the lives of their neighbors."

Last year, Crank & Boom briefly caused a state-wide shortage of JD's heavy cream. "JD Country Milk had to source cream from some of the other local farmers," Green says. But it's a "problem" she'd love to see continue. "We want to help farmers grow their

business, and then get to a point where they have to employ other farmers, and buy milk from other farmers. The bigger we are able to grow, the more impact we can have, and the more positive change we can create from something as simple as ice cream.”

Where to Find It: Look for Crank & Boom ice cream at retailers including:

- Louisville: Liquor Barn, Whole Foods Market
- Lexington: Kroger (select locations), Good Foods Co-Op, Liquor Barn, Kentucky Proud Food Store
- Versailles: Kroger
- Georgetown: Kroger
- Somerset: Market on Main

### Rattlesnake Hill Farm

www.rattlesnakehillfarm.com  
 rattlesnakehillgarlic@gmail.com  
 (502) 673-9431

The success of Megan Alexander’s Rattlesnake Hill Farm line of garlic glazes and garlic seasonings began purely accidentally: she had ordered too much garlic, and needed to find some way to put it to good use.

“I had ordered enough garlic to plant 5 acres, and by February, I was just done. I couldn’t plant anymore,” says Alexander, who with her husband, Jim, owns and operates Rattlesnake Hill Farm in Bloomfield. “I had 50 pounds of garlic sitting around and had to come up with something else to do with it. That’s where the original, roasted garlic glaze recipe came from.”

Four years ago, the couple added a small, on-site commercial kitchen to produce the farm’s new lines of artisan, bourbon smoked garlic salts and seasonings, all of which Megan creates by hand in small batches. They produce their perennially popular varieties of garlic glazes in a commercial kitchen in Louisville.

While the bourbon smoked garlic salt is the hottest seller right now, the Alexanders’ favorite go-to flavor booster is their gourmet rub and seasoning. “My husband puts it on his mac and cheese. It’s good on popcorn. We use it on everything,” says Megan, a member of Salt River Electric Cooperative.

While not many farmers in Kentucky specialize in garlic as the Alexanders have, for them it’s been the perfect choice. They grow it naturally, using no herbicides, pesticides, or chemical fertilizers. “Garlic is



JOLEA BROWN

### Want to buy Kentucky Proud? Look for the logo.



Developed by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, the Kentucky Proud marketing program is open to products

grown, processed, or manufactured in Kentucky that comply with all health and food safety requirements. Membership is free. The program currently has more than 5,400 members, says Roger Snell, the program’s Farm-to-Retail liaison. Find out more online at [www.kyproud.com](http://www.kyproud.com).



JOLEA BROWN

very hardy. We don't even have to water it. The seasons here are perfect for it," says Megan, who moved to Kentucky with Jim, a native Louisvillian, from California in the mid-1990s. "Kentucky is the land of opportunity. We never thought we could actually buy a farm and make it work. We're so glad to be here," Megan says.

Where to find it: Rattlesnake Hill products are available at retailers across the state, including:

- Louisville: Garden Gate Fruit Market, Whole Foods Market, Lucky's Market
- Lexington: Good Foods Co-op, Stuardo's Olive Oil Company
- Bloomfield: Old Sugar Valley Country Store
- Bardstown: The Mercantile Store, Olive Sprout
- Versailles: Boyd Orchards
- At local festivals like the Kentucky State BBQ Festival in Danville, Kentucky Bourbon Festival in Bardstown, and the Madison Chautauqua Festival in Madison, Indiana.

## Mr. G's Kettle Corn

mrgskettlecorn.com  
info@mrgskettlecorn.com  
(502) 767-3477

Louisville's Greg Reece already had a steady gig as a truck driver for Old Dominion Freight Line when he decided to start selling kettle corn at farmers markets in 2011 as a way to earn a little extra cash. Fast forward five years, and Reece now has a full-time job running his own company, complete with his own retail line: Mr. G's Kettle Corn.

Reece's signature blend of sweet-and-salty kettle corn can now be found in 118 Kroger stores across the state, not to mention both the Lexington and Louisville Lucky's Market locations, where it is routinely one of the stores' top-selling products.

The popcorn in Mr. G's Kettle Corn is 100 percent Kentucky-grown, or he doesn't use it. Most recently, Reece acquired his corn from the Shipp farm in Rineyville. This year alone, the company is on track to pop between 20,000 and 30,000 pounds of kettle corn at its production facility in west Louisville.

The quick growth of his kettle corn empire isn't lost on Reece. "It's been kind of overwhelming in a way. I didn't start out with a business plan. I didn't have bags designed. I didn't have labels or a logo. Making the call to the Kentucky Proud program was key," he says. "I sort of followed their coattails. They said, 'This is what you need to do.' They got me in touch with growers and buyers. And everything sort of fell into place at the right time."

Where to Find it: Find Mr. G's Kettle Corn at Kroger stores across the state, as well as:

- Louisville: Lucky's Market, Liquor Barn, Paul's Fruit Market, Garden Gate Fruit Market
- Lexington: Lucky's Market, Liquor Barn
- Elizabethtown: Liquor Barn

## Homestead Heritage Meats

Fredericktown (in Washington County, between Springfield and Bardstown)  
homesteadheritagemeats@gmail.com

Patrick Wimsatt, a Salt River Electric Co-op member and owner of Homestead Heritage Meats, has raised cattle on his 80-acre Fredericktown farm since 2007. Four years ago, he was looking for a way to better use the trim and surplus products left over from his sales of steak and prime cuts of meat. Thus was launched his lines of summer sausage and beef sticks, the latter sold in three flavors: original, teriyaki, and barbecue chipotle.

Wimsatt's Homestead Heritage Meats products can be found in Kroger stores throughout Kentucky, going from farm to shelf entirely thanks to Kentucky producers.

Wimsatt predominantly uses his own herd of cattle, though he does also purchase cows from other Washington County farmers. The meat is processed at Boone's Butcher Shop in Bardstown, just 9 miles from his home. Then, it is further cooked, processed, and packaged as ready-to-eat sausages and jerky by Webb's Butcher Block in Meade County. "There is nothing that is out of state," says Wimsatt. "It's all done right in the central part of the state here."

Wimsatt's prime cuts of meat are distributed to Kentucky restaurants through Fishmarket Seafoods and Meats in Louisville, which, like Boone's and Webb's, is another Kentucky-based, family-run company.

"When you buy our products, you're supporting me, and them, all the way down the line," Wimsatt says. And while sales have been good on both fronts, he hopes to eventually grow even bigger. By adopting new, environmentally friendly farming techniques,



JOLEA BROWN

■ Homestead Heritage Meats Summer Sausage. Photo: Jolea Brown





including a composting barn, Wimsatt plans to increase his herd numbers. "It's been good to get in with the Kentucky Proud display at Kroger," Wimsatt says. "It's been a pretty steady source of selling for us."

Where to Find It: Look for Homestead Heritage Meats products at Kroger stores across the state.

### Lucky Clover Farm

www.facebook.com/LuckyCloverFarm  
LuckyCloverFarm@gmail.com  
(859) 779-8522

Joey Farmer likes to joke that he's the farmer, his partner, Gina Micciche, is the baker, and they "jam" together. It's an appropriate tagline for the bustling business and array of products they've created together at their 5-acre Lucky Clover

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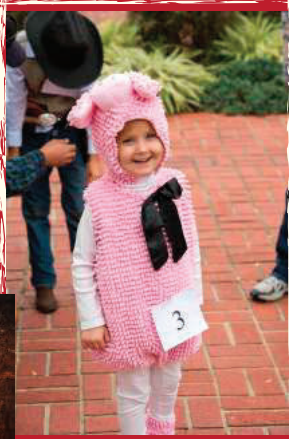
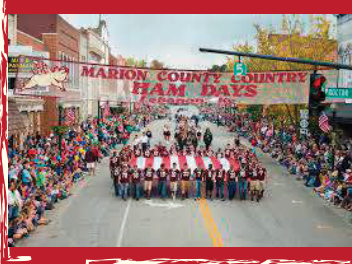
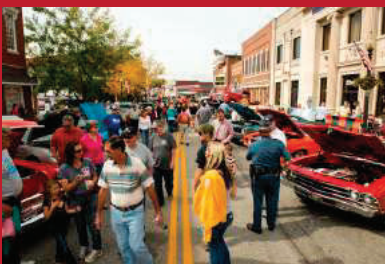


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**D**o you have an idea for a Kentucky food product? Take advantage of the many resources available to Kentucky growers and producers to get your product ready for market.

**University of Kentucky Food Systems Innovation Center**  
[www.uky.edu/fsic](http://www.uky.edu/fsic)

The UK Food Systems Innovation Center can help Kentucky growers and producers with product development to get their food products ready for retail markets, from market testing and shelf-life analysis, to assistance with developing nutrition labels and conducting food safety and pH testing, says Leeann Slaughter, the Center's coordinator. (Canned foods must maintain a pH below 4.6 to avoid the growth of foodborne botulism.) Since its official launch in 2009, the Center has assisted more than 1,000 clients. It can help them navigate and understand distinctions between

food safety standards required to market to groceries and other retail outlets versus simpler "home-based processing and micro-processing" guidelines, which cover value-added items sold at farmers markets or roadside stands. More information on this is available at [https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/homebased\\_processing\\_microprocessing](https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/homebased_processing_microprocessing).

**University of Kentucky Market Ready Program**  
[www.uky.edu/marketready](http://www.uky.edu/marketready)

Is your product ready for retail shelves? UK's Market Ready Program offers one-day workshops to help Kentucky growers and producers ensure that their products meet the demands of area grocers and wholesalers. Workshops address communication and relationship building with potential buyers; marketing, packaging, and labeling; how to develop effective supply and delivery chains; and business-related issues, including bookkeeping strategies,

securing proper insurance, and more. Registration is \$25. Check website for upcoming dates, or call Alex Butler at (859) 218-4383 for more information.

**Jackson County Regional Food Center**  
[www.regionalfoodcenterky.com](http://www.regionalfoodcenterky.com)

Located in Tyner, the FDA-approved commercial kitchen at the Jackson County Regional Food Center is well-equipped to help you get your product processed and packaged—whether your goal is simply creating a small-scale, personal batch, or a 100-case retail order. Launched in 2010, the Center currently works with roughly 15-20 regular clients, the largest being Lucky Clover, which uses the Center almost weekly, says Jackson Energy member Mary Carpenter, the Food Center's kitchen manager. Still, the Center is underutilized and welcomes new clients. Any farmer or entrepreneur can use the facility to produce their food products at a rental rate

**Kenny's Farmhouse Cheese**, clockwise from left: Smoked Gouda, Peppercorn Asiago, Gouda, and Smoked Kentucky Bleu. Photo: Jolea Brown

of \$35 per hour. Products made by the Center include jams, jellies, salsas, barbecue sauces, salad dressings, baked goods, and candies. "Seeing all the different products" is the best part of the job, says Carpenter. "Especially with Lucky Clover. They have jams and jellies in flavors that I would never have imagined."

**Kentucky Proud**  
[www.kyproud.com](http://www.kyproud.com)

It's free to join Kentucky Proud, the official state marketing program for agricultural products. Kentucky Proud members have access to support from Kentucky Department of Agriculture marketing specialists and can apply for grants and cost-share funds. Plus, members can display the Kentucky Proud logo on their products—an easy, eye-catching way to note that your product is "Made in Kentucky."

Farm in northern Madison County.

The Clark Energy Cooperative customers are regulars at festivals throughout Kentucky, where they sell their heirloom tomatoes and tomato plants as well as Micciche's homemade breads. But it's their retail business that's really taken off, thanks to the popularity of their many flavorful jams, jellies, dried tomatoes, and popular hemp and honey-roasted granola—all now available at Kroger stores and other retailers across the state.

Farmer and Micciche produce their Lucky Clover products at the Jackson County Regional Food Center, a commercial kitchen in Tyner. When they develop a new recipe, they test it first at the University of Kentucky's Food Systems Innovation Center before launching into full-scale production. "There's not a batch of jam or dried tomatoes or a bag of granola that we don't have a hand in," says Farmer.

Lucky Clover sources Kentucky ingredients whenever possible. Farmer and Micciche grow their own tomatoes and hot peppers, but look to other area farmers for the blackberries, strawberries, apples, and other produce used in their dozen flavors of jams and jellies, including their unique cantaloupe jam, which goes perfectly with salmon. Other flavors, including their peach jalapeño jelly, can be whipped with cream cheese to make a delicious dip, while their top-selling caramel apple jam, when warmed, is a customer-favorite topper for pancakes and ice cream.

Lucky Clover is part of both the Kentucky Proud and Appalachia Proud marketing programs, and its



products can be found in 100 Kroger stores across the state. Eventually, they hope to take their products to a national stage.

"I thought I could make a living selling tomato plants only, and that didn't really work out," says Farmer, a native Kentuckian who spent more than two decades in New York before returning home to purchase his own farm. "We found that, on our small acreage, you can't just do one thing. You have to diversify."

Where to Find It: Look for Lucky Clover Farm products at Kroger stores across the state as well as retailers including:

- Berea: Kentucky Artisan Center
- Clermont: Isaac's Café at Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest
- Louisville: A Taste of Kentucky, Paul's Fruit Market
- Lucky's Market in Louisville and Lexington

## Kenny's Farmhouse Cheese

www.kennyscheese.com  
kenny@kennyscheese.com  
(888) 571-4029

Kenny's Farmhouse Cheese, located in Austin, Kentucky, and a member of Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation, makes all of its products from milk that is extremely locally sourced.

"Everything is made on-site," says Jeanette Stumpfenhorst, office manager at Kenny's for eight years. "There's never been milk brought in from another farm. The milk comes from the herd that is here on the farm."

The land at Kenny's was a dairy farm for several years before the cheese making began in 1998. The herd is comprised of a crossbreed of several varieties of cow, including American Holstein, European Holstein, Australian Red, Brown Swiss, and Jersey. It is a closed herd, which means Kenny's has control over the breeding process and raises its own calves from birth.

Kenny's is Kentucky Proud and produces more than 28 varieties of cheese, with cheddar as the top seller from month to month, Stumpfenhorst says. Some of the signature cheeses, like the Smoked Kentucky Bleu, come in a close second.

Where to Find It: Online at [www.kennyscheese.com](http://www.kennyscheese.com), in various wineries and restaurants across the state and specialty stores including:

- Rainbow Blossom
- Whole Foods **KL**



ONLINE

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## Hungry for more?

Kentucky producers in this story tell how they began their enterprises, why they support made-in-Kentucky ingredients, and explain the role Kentucky Proud has played in a series of videos. You can watch them by going to [KentuckyLiving.com](http://KentuckyLiving.com) and searching "Made in Kentucky food."