

'Homemade for sale'

Book offers advice for starting a home food business



Photos by John D. Ivanko/homemadeforsale.com

Above: WFU members Lisa Kivirist (pictured with her son, Liam) and her husband, John Ivanko, coauthored 'Homemade for Sale: How to Set Up and Market a Food Business from your Home Kitchen.' The book offers tips on food entrepreneurship.

WFU members Lisa Kivirist and John Ivanko are set to launch their new book, "Homemade for Sale: How to Set Up and Market a Food Business from Your Home Kitchen." We caught up with them for a Q&A on the book, which aims to foster the growing cottage food movement.

To start, can you tell us a bit about yourselves?

For over 18 years, we've operated our farm and award-winning Inn Serendipity Bed & Breakfast, located outside Monroe, with a focus on caring for the land, restoring our soil and striving to make our community a better place to live. We are a highly diversified operation, from raising vegetables to running the farm completely on renewable energy. Inn Serendipity Bed & Breakfast reflects our commitment to sustainability, green design and contributing to both our local rural community and the wider global family, thus our numerous books, and articles, John's photography, and Lisa's work as founder of the Rural Women's Project of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES).

This isn't your first book. Can you talk about some of your previous writings?

All of our co-authored books — *Farmstead Chef* cookbook, *ECOpreneur* and *Rural Renaissance* — dive into different aspects of sustainability. We believe in living on abundance, not scarcity. Think: abundant renewable energy not limited fossil fuels, like oil or gas. We focus on practical, positive and restorative opportunities, for example, to grow our own food, make our own energy and create our own livelihood with a small business. Our latest book, *Homemade for Sale*, focuses on the opportunity to do so from a farmhouse kitchen (at least in 42 states), while the award-winning *ECOpreneur* delves into how to grow a green business better, not necessarily bigger.

Farmstead Chef is the cookbook for home cooks who either grow what they eat, browse farmers' market stalls or belong to a CSA; it's all about fresh, seasonal, sustainable and local. Finally, *Rural Renaissance: Renewing the Quest for the Good Life* covers our back-to-the-land story, from getting soil under our fingernails to raising a small

Meet the Farmers Union Family

Who: Lisa Kivirist & John Ivanko.

Joined WFU in: 2012

Business: Inn Serendipity Bed & Breakfast.

Where: Monroe, WI

Want to get your hands on a copy of *Homemade for Sale*? Visit www.homemadeforsale.com or call New Society Publishers at 800-567-6772, ext 111.

Win a copy! Like Wisconsin Farmers Union on Facebook and watch the page in early March for a chance to win *Homemade for Sale*!

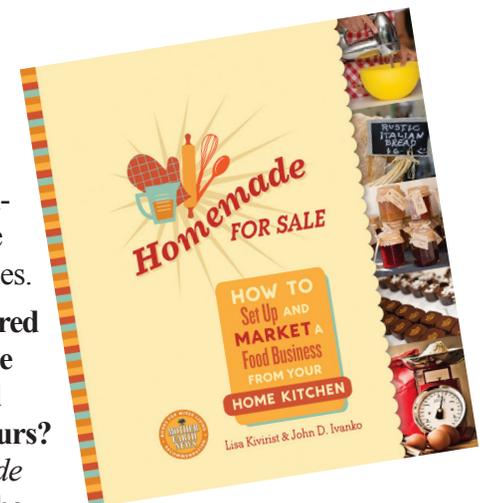
flock of chickens and turning a corn crib into a greenhouse made of straw bales.

What inspired you to write about food entrepreneurs?

Homemade for Sale is the first authoritative book on starting a home-based kitchen business under a state's cottage food law.

Our work with the WFU and involvement with championing the Cookie Bill here in Wisconsin led us to research and learn about cottage food law opportunities across the country. Turns out that 42 states have such laws in place, providing incredible potential for small-scale start-ups to launch from their home with barely any investment and often with few regulatory barriers.

No detailed and practical resource existed to support these food entrepreneurs, which motivated us to write *Homemade for Sale*. Also, we found many people simply aren't aware of their state's cottage food laws. This book provides the platform to jump-start businesses and inspire people.



Right: "Your farm-direct story is what customers are buying when they pick up your jam or jelly," said author Lisa Kivirist, who has been a leader in lobbying for fair cottage food laws in Wisconsin.



Left: WFU plans to be part of a push this fall to reintroduce Cookie Bill legislation, which would allow sales of homemade baked goods.



What audience is the book geared toward?

Homemade for Sale is a guide for home cooks unacquainted with operation of a small business and also includes more detailed information for business-savvy, but first-time food entrepreneurs. Budding home kitchen entrepreneurs come in many persuasions and myriad motivations. Here are a few of the many folks who have welcomed our *Homemade for Sale* book and launched home kitchen businesses:

- A farmer looking to diversify their business by selling value-added products (high acid foods, like jams, jellies, pickles and salsa) made with fresh fruits, vegetables or herbs grown on the farm and sell them at farmers' markets to boost their revenue.
- Dream-catcher, eager to fulfill a life-long dream of running a small food enterprise.
- Stay-at-home mom wanting to earn income while keeping an eye on the kids.
- Someone with food sensitivities or allergies, who, after years of struggle, has found delicious recipes that work for them and might for others, too.
- Dedicated locavore foodie, wanting to make a difference in the local food movement beyond their shopping habits.
- Retiree looking to stay relevant and active, plus make a little extra "fun money."

Readers of *Homemade for Sale* are a part of a growing movement of people starting small food businesses from their home. No capital needed, just good recipes, enthusiasm and commitment, plus enough know-how so that they can turn ingredients into sought-after treats for their local community. Everything required is probably already in their home kitchen. Best of all, they can start tomorrow!

Wisconsin does have a Cottage Food Law on the books — the Pickle Bill, which authorizes sales of canned high-acid products such as pickles, jams and jellies. What do you think it will take to expand Cottage Food opportunities here?

We've been working with WFU to get cottage food law expanded to include baked goods and potentially other non-hazardous food products to increase opportunity for other budding home-based food entrepreneurs, such as muffin bakers like ourselves. Therefore, this new bill, focused on low-moisture foods like cookies and breads, has been nicknamed the "Cookie Bill." Next steps are to re-introduce the legislation during the fall session. To ensure the Cookie Bill's passage this time around, we will need support from both WFU members and home bakers statewide who want to bring their dream business to life — from their home kitchen.

You have been WFU members since 2012. What made you want to be a part of the organization?

We strongly connect with and support the WFU's mission and the organization's commitment to family farms and healthy rural environments. We first connected with WFU formally when we saw the need to expand cottage food law in Wisconsin to include baked goods.

Kara O'Connor and her WFU policy staff have been so supportive and helpful from the start as together we navigate and strategize to get the Cookie Bill passed. This new legislation would most definitely not be as far along as it is today without WFU championing it. We're also involved with launching the new South Central WFU chapter. This chapter has spearheaded the SOIL SISTERS event, running July 31 through August 2, 2015. It's a three-day celebration of Wisconsin farms and rural life that involves over 20 farms and includes a farm-to-table dinner, numerous on-farm workshops

and a day-long tour of farms, all led by women. SOIL SISTERS (www.soilsisterswi.org) is sponsored, in part, by the Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation and supported by Renewing the Countryside and the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, with major funding from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

Will we see familiar faces in *Homemade for Sale*?

WFU members Erin Schneider and Rob McClure of Hilltop Community Farm in LaValle are one featured story profile in *Homemade for Sale*. Erin and Rob produce various high-acid food products using their farm-raised vegetables, including salsas and various pickled items.

The cottage food business movement truly reflects the cooperative mission of the Wisconsin Farmers Union in that folks involved with these start-ups are generously willing to share their tips and provide support. As readers experience the story profiles in the book, including Erin and Rob, they take away inspiration and confidence that they can do this themselves.

What key points would you want readers to take away after reading *Homemade for Sale*?

Start small, pick a favorite recipe and really develop it, test it and so

forth. Then do the important work of crafting your marketing message around what you're making. A large part of *Homemade for Sale* addresses the marketing aspects of creating and selling a food product, from pricing and naming your product to packaging and labeling it. Your farm-direct story is what many customers are buying when they pick up your jam or jelly.

How are you applying in your own life what you've learned from this writing adventure?

Diversification has always been a strong theme and mantra in our lives and our experience in the research and writing of *Homemade for Sale*, along with other writing endeavors, exemplifies this. Especially for those of us running farms, it's not wise to put all our eggs in one basket. Having a lot of different, smaller endeavors going on minimizes risk and maximizes the creative process.

We operate a cottage food business under Wisconsin's current Pickle Bill, producing pickled pumpkin, sauerkraut and traditional cucumber pickles. We can't wait until we can sell our baked goods, once the Wisconsin Cookie Bill passes. For any WFU members eager to do the same, join the Cookie Bill Facebook page at (<http://www.facebook.com/wisconsincottagefood>).

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The Plaza Hotel • Eau Claire, WI

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