

## Holland's Family Cheese Doubles Gouda Cheese Production With New Plant, Farm

Thorp, WI—Enjoying award-winning products from Holland's Family Cheese just got easier with completion of the company's new creamery and visitor center here.

Holland's Family Cheese broke ground on its new headquarters, a 100-acre parcel of land just off the southwest corner of Thorp Exit 108, on July 15, 2013.

Cheesemaking has just started at the new facility, and the company is finishing the final touches of its retail store and dairy.

We wanted a more centralized location, said Kimberly Rabuck, general manager, Holland's Family Cheese.

We couldn't expand any more at our old facility. In 2008, we expanded our aging room in order to make more cheese, Rabuck said.

We also did some renovation on our brine tank area, resulting in more cheese batches, but it wasn't enough, she said.

The demand for our cheese just continued to go up.

The multi-faceted, \$5.1 million project first began in mid-2011 when owners Rolf and Marieke Penterman spotted the land for sale just off of the Thorp exit.

"Marieke came to the team one day and said, 'How about we buy it and build there?'" Rabuck said.

"We wanted to be in a more centralized location, where people could get off the highway, grab a pound or two of cheese, a free cup of coffee, and be on their way," she said.

Since the potential property was within the city limits of Thorp, they needed to get a portion of that land rezoned from light industrial use to general industrial use to allow animal husbandry.

This sparked a debate among a small group of Thorp residents who thought that having a dairy so close to town would be detrimental to the community and local school.

The Town of Thorp held a public meeting on Feb. 2, 2012, with a record turnout of close to 175 people who came in support or opposition, and the committee voted unanimously to approve the rezoning. Holland's Family Cheese closed on the land about two weeks later.

### Fewer Cows, More Cheese

On the northern part of the property, a creamery is in its final stages of construction for cheese production and retail sales. The dairy – complete with upstairs viewing area – will be located just south of the creamery.



Holland's Family Cheese hopes to increase output of their award-winning Gouda with its new cheese production facility. The company just began production in the new plant early last week.

At the old facility, we were milking between 800 and 850 cows. In the new facility, we're only milking 300 cows, Rabuck said.

The milking went down, but as far as cheesemaking, production will increase, she said.

"In the old facility, we were only using about 10 percent of the milk produced on the farm. In the new facility, we'll probably be using 30 percent of the milk," Rabuck said.

"Also in our old facility, we were making one batch of cheese – 40 wheels – five times a week. In our new facility, we want to at least double that. When we start making cheese, we want to make 80 wheels a day, five days a week," she said.

"We might possibly expand to Saturday, or maybe Sunday, but we want to work into it slowly," Rabuck said. "We don't want to take on too much right away."

### New Retail Facility Designed To Educate, Entertain Customers

The new retail facility is in final stages of competition, and is open for business. Just in the past few weeks, business is booming.

The new retail space is now 10 to 15 times the size of the former store, Rabuck said. With viewing windows, visitors can see the cheese being made.

"When people come in, they'll walk right into our retail store. As they move deeper into the store, they can see the cheese being made," Rabuck said. "They can see the brine room, the cheese being coated, and aged in the aging room."

A gas fireplace warms a special seating area, with complimentary coffee and free wi-fi. The creamery will also be fitted with a commercial kitchen, featuring a monthly recipe using Holland's Cheese of the Month.

Plans for cooking classes, wine tastings and the serving of small menu items like grilled cheese sandwiches are also in the works.

During warmer weather, visitors can enjoy outside seating on

the creamery's wrap-around porch, with "ice cream dipping, coffee and snacks galore," Kimberly Rabuck continued.

Most of the major construction and finishing work should be completed by the end of the month, according to Rabuck.

"The commercial kitchen should be ready by March or April. It's a work in progress," she said.

Visitors will also be able to see the dairy itself, with viewing windows and camera set up throughout the building, where guests can witness activities in places like the calving pen.

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Kimberly Rabuck,  
Holland's Family Cheese

"This is a great way to educate visitors about the dairy industry. A lot of people think milk and cheese come from the grocery store," Rabuck said.

"We want people to learn where milk comes from, where cheese comes from, and the passion dairy farmers have for their milk and cheese makers have for their cheese," she said.

"And people are becoming more concerned about what they put in their mouths these days," Rabuck continued. "This is a great opportunity for us to share our passion about the dairy and cheese industry, and to showcase wonderful Wisconsin products."

For more information, visit [www.hollandfamilycheese.com](http://www.hollandfamilycheese.com).

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