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# InSpire

Magazine



Alsum Farms  
& Produce  
Celebrates 50 Years

Healing the Body  
Naturally, Without Meds



Wendy, Larry and Heidi with Spudly the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association Mascot.

# Alsum Farms & Produce Celebrates 50 Years

When Glenn Alsum started a one-man operation in a 600 square-foot potato shed, he could have never imagined the passion he would ignite in future generations. Fifty years later, the operation has grown into 400,000 square feet of storage buildings and production space; over 350 full-time and seasonal employees; 200,000,000 pounds of potatoes grown and packed annually; and onions, pumpkins, and even more fresh produce distributed to grocery stores and national retailers across the nation. Most importantly, the Alsum family and their dedicated staff are still serving as the company's backbone, fueled by their passion for providing nutritious, sustainably grown food.

After Glenn's passing in 1981, his widow, Linda, asked Larry Alsum to help manage the business with her. In 1984, Linda sold her shares to Larry to stay at home to raise her children. Since then, Larry Alsum has led the company through decades of prosperity which included adding a trucking subsidiary, multiple facility remodels and upgrades, moving from co-packing potatoes to becoming potato farmers, becoming a Wisconsin Healthy Grown® Certified potato farm, growing pumpkins, and so much more. Now, Larry's daughters Heidi (Alsum) Randall and Wendy (Alsum) Dykstra are both serving as Chief Operating Officers in preparation to take over the company upon Larry's retirement. While two women leading a massive agricultural business may seem unexpected, Heidi and Wendy have been preparing their entire lives.

"The family business was part of our lives growing up," Wendy recalls. "One of our long-time associates would tell you she still remembers the days we would come into the old office

and color near her desk on the floor." As children, the girls would visit their dad at work, walking through the packing shed and coolers and riding in a truck to the farm. On some Saturdays when Larry would drive a sleeper cab, the girls would enjoy riding in the bunk area.

As soon as they were old enough, Heidi and Wendy began helping by grading potatoes, digging samples, and performing yield checks during the growing season. Over the years, they attended produce tradeshow, aided in the office, and even helped paint various areas in the packing facility, storage bins, bathrooms, and a plant breakroom. "It was a great experience working in our packing facility alongside so many wonderful people," adds Heidi.

Helping the family business at such a young age certainly made an impact on Wendy and Heidi's career decisions. Wendy explains, "I've always admired my dad's dedication to the business and passion for the industry. From working in the business at a young age, I always knew I wanted to come back to work with my dad and so many other great employees and be part of the continued growth and success of the business." With this goal in mind, Wendy attended her father's alma mater, UW-Whitewater, where she majored in accounting.

Meanwhile, Heidi was less certain of her future when she started college. "I have always had a heart for individuals with special needs," she says. To that end, she began college at UW-Whitewater as an education major with a goal of working with children who have special needs. Throughout college, she participated in Big Brothers/Big Sisters, where she mentored a girl with autism. However, toward the end of her sophomore

year, things began to change. "I had a conversation with my dad that would ultimately lead me to working in the family business," she recalls. Consequently, she changed her major to business and specialized in human resource management with a goal of returning to Alsum Farms & Produce.

Now, both women serve unique roles within the company. "Even though we have grown significantly in our 50 years," Heidi explains, "we are still a small enough business that we all wear a lot of different hats." Heidi is responsible for overseeing sales, marketing, purchasing, human resources, production, quality control, maintenance, and warehouse teams. Meanwhile, Wendy supports daily operations for accounting and IT, logistics, and farm teams. She also works with business partners like banking, insurance, software providers, and equipment suppliers and enjoys collaborating with company leaders to design and implement business strategies, plans, and procedures. As if that weren't enough on their plates, each woman also serves on industry boards at both a state and national level. Additionally, Heidi serves as Director of the Cambria-Friesland Area Chamber of Commerce and Chair of the Education Committee Meeting at Randolph Christian School.

While working with family often presents unique challenges, the sisters enjoy the opportunities that come with the business. "We have a good working relationship as a family," Wendy explains. "We recognize that at times, each of us has our own unique perspective and opinions but it is when we work together that we find the best solution."

"I really enjoy working alongside my dad and sister," Heidi adds. She has looked up to both her parents as role models her entire life, particularly her dad's reputation within the community and throughout the produce industry as someone who operates his business with integrity, servant leadership, and a love for learning. "My sister and I have always gotten along quite well, and I feel like working together has only made that relationship stronger. From personality to skillset, we are very different people, but I think that's why we work well together. We are both willing to share our opinions and challenge each other when a situation requires a different perspective."

But at Alsum Farms & Produce, working with family extends beyond Wendy, Heidi, and Larry. Heidi's husband has worked at the company for 17 years and is currently the maintenance manager. Brothers Tim, Chad, and Noah have all worked at the company at various times. Heidi's oldest daughter Morgan has been working for the past two summers grading potatoes, and both Heidi and Wendy's daughters enjoy

riding along to the farm with grandpa. And although Larry is the company's president, Heidi and Wendy take special care to recognize their mom's contributions as well. "My mom is the glue that holds our family together," Heidi says. "She is part of the reason we can do what we do in business." Our Aunt Jan served as our CFO for over 25 years. Previously our Uncle Brad worked as our logistics manager at Alsum Transport and Uncle Steve previously served as our maintenance manager.

And beyond those who carry the Alsum name, Wendy explains, "One of the benefits of having our business based in a small community is that everyone is part of the family." In fact, both sisters agree that the most rewarding part of working at Alsum Farms & Produce is the people they get to work alongside every day. Although the company has grown to over

350 employees during harvest season, they still maintain a family-like atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and comfortable.

This culture of closeness is deeply rooted in the mission, vision, and values of the company. Their values—integrity, accountability, excellence, stewardship, and servant leadership—shine in every decision the organization makes. For example, the company is a founding member of the Wisconsin Healthy Grown® Program, which means they utilize the program's regenerative agriculture approach to farming that works to strengthen ecosystems and community resilience. Another example of the company's stewardship is their nearly 50 acres dedicated to prairie restoration and pollinator



Founder Glenn Alsum's Family at the 50th Anniversary Celebration. Pictured left to right Glenn's sister - Shelley, Mother - Lois and sister - Cindy.

habitats. While many of their sustainability practices may go unnoticed by most consumers, these important steps ensure fertile soil for future generations as well as energy and water conservation.

One of the most significant examples of Alsum Farms & Produce's commitment to their community is the actions they have taken to feed the hungry and reduce food waste. Since 2000, they have donated more than 7 million pounds of potatoes to Second Harvest Food Bank along with other regional food pantries. "It is so rewarding to grow a potato crop that is nutritious, delicious, and helps feed the world," Heidi adds. In fact, they took the idea of feeding the world one step further during their 50th anniversary celebration, where they held an Employee Day of Service in which associates helped pack 132,192 meals that will feed 362 malnourished children in developing countries for a year!

At the end of the day, running a major business-like Alsum Farms & Produce is not without its challenges. Wendy and her husband Neil have two daughters, Reagan (6th grade



Alsum Farms & Produce - Friesland Office & Production staff.

at Randolph Christian School) and Riley (3rd grade at RCS). Heidi and her husband Mark have three daughters, Morgan (a sophomore at Randolph High School), Madison (freshman at RHS), and Aubrey (2nd grade at RCS). It can be difficult to balance work with family life. “As an owner in the business, and like most juggling a career and young family, I find it challenging to create a work/life balance,” Wendy explains.

Heidi adds, “I know it is cliché, but my kids have grown up quickly and trying to find time to be present in my family’s lives while also giving the business the attention that it deserves is a struggle.” Both women are already considering their daughters’ futures, but there will be no pressure to join the family business. “I would be elated if they want to join down the road, but I ultimately want my daughters to pick professions where they wake up excited to go to work in the morning,” Heidi explains.

In reflecting on the past 50 years of the business, Heidi and Wendy want to thank everyone who has made it possible. “It’s truly because you, as consumers, seek out Alsum potatoes and onions at your neighborhood grocer that we are able to celebrate this milestone. And for that, we are grateful!”

So, what’s in store for the next 50 years of Alsum Farms & Produce? It’s clear the future is bright, and the company doesn’t plan on slowing down. In fact, they intend to continue focusing on making a positive impact in employee, customer, and supplier relationships; emphasizing their commitment to sustainability for their land and resources; and carrying on the legacy of the family business for future generations. \*

Alsum Farms & Produce is helping you stretch your food dollars by offering \$1 OFF Alsum 3 lb. and 5 lb. russet, red and yellow potatoes now thru March 31, 2024. Scan QR code below or visit <https://alsum.com/coupons/> to print and redeem your coupons at Piggly Wiggly, Woodman’s Markets or independent grocers.



50th Anniversary Celebration in Friesland on August 12th, 2023.

# Mini Hasselback Potatoes with Creamy Dill Dip



Recipe provided by  
Alsum Farm's & Produce  
Scan the code for a coupon.



**Waupun Piggy Wiggly - 100 Gateway Drive - Waupun**

Our Meat Department made a Switch to a High-End Pork Product Line! Smithfield's Prime All Natural Fresh Pork. This Means: A longer Life, 20% more Tender Meat, NO artificial ingredients or hormones, and just all around better "Restaurant Quality" Pork.



**Jahnke's Piggy Wiggly - 100 S. Western Ave. Juneau**

Locally owned by Dan and Jane Jahnke provide our customers with a clean and friendly shopping atmosphere, along with providing the finest quality fresh products with superb customer service to all our valued customers!

## Ingredients:

### For Potatoes:

5 Pounds Alsum B- Size golden potatoes  
6 Tablespoon Olive oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

### For dill dip:

6 Tablespoons Fresh dill chopped  
12 Scallions green and white parts  
Zest of 1 lemon  
3 Tablespoon Fresh lemon juice  
1.5 Cup Sour cream  
0.75 Cup Mayonnaise

## Directions:

- Preheat oven to 425°F.
- Using a sharp knife, cut slits into the potatoes that are approximately 1/8 of an inch apart and do not cut all the way through (you can use chopsticks or something similar to brace each side of the potato and stop your knife from going through).
- Place cut potatoes in a bowl. Mix with olive oil and plenty of salt and pepper.
- Place cut side up onto a parchment covered roasting pan.
- Roast for approximately 60 minutes, or until potatoes are tender and golden brown on the outside.
- Meanwhile, add dill, scallions, salt, pepper, lemon zest, and lemon juice to a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add the sour cream and mayonnaise and pulse until combined. (Alternatively, you can just chop the dill and onions finely and mix in a bowl)
- Serve the potatoes warm with the dip.