

FIELD
TESTED



Popsicles: Adding Value To Farm Seconds

Field Tested is a series of reports about farm tools that have been tested by Montana farmers to enhance their specialty crop production. The reports describe these farmers' findings to help others make informed decisions about their specialty crop businesses. Visit FarmLinkMontana.org to read more Field Tested reports. This project is administered by the Community Food & Agriculture Coalition with funding from the Montana Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

FRESH ROOTS FARM | POLSON



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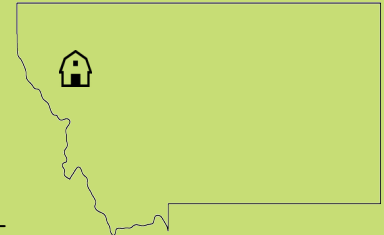
FRESH ROOTS FARM SNAPSHOT

Location: Polson, MT

Acres in Production: 6

Operator(s): Karl Sutton
and Darci Jones

Crops: Organic mixed vegetables and fruit, vegetable seed, popsicles



INTRODUCTION

The market for locally-made popsicles in Western Montana has been a vacuum and Karl Sutton and Darci Jones wanted to capture that market. Producing popsicles would help them sell second-quality fruit as a value-added product at farmers markets, summer festivals, cafes, and schools. They purchased a popsicle cart, molds, juicer, and an immersion blender to get started on their popsicle enterprise: Flare Pops. Karl and Darci hope this work will inspire other farmers to think about value-added products to reduce farm waste and receive a higher price for crops they are already growing.



Fresh Roots' Flare Pop logo

MARKET CHANNELS FOR PRODUCE SECONDS

The remnants of the fruit and seed production on Fresh Roots Farm in Polson generates a large amount of second-quality produce. Since seconds are cheaper, they threatened to cannibalize the market for the farm's first-quality fruits. Karl and Darci decided to investigate innovative market channels so they could sell these second-quality fruits and vegetables. They decided to enter the value-added market with popsicles sold from a cart.

Karl and Darci made a goal to use at least one product from the farm in each popsicle flavor. By doing this, they capture value on products that would otherwise have no value. For example, when the melons they grow for seed are harvested and the seed removed, the overripe flesh of the melon is usually discarded. Instead of wasting the melon flesh, Karl and Darci use it in a popsicle flavor. Second-quality strawberries and cucumbers that would be discarded have value for Karl and Darci because they are used in the popsicles. The additional value from a product that would generate little or no income for the farm and potentially reduce income on established products is a way for Karl and Darci to increase their farm revenue.

MATERIALS PURCHASED

- WF3000 Commercial Juicer (\$1,100)
- Waring 21" Immersion Blender (\$375)
- 334PC Ice Pop Push Cart w/ logo (\$3,100)
- Ataforma Michmid stainless steel molds (\$500)

TOTAL: ~\$5,000



Above: Flare Pops Pop Stand

TIP

Popsicle sales slow when outside temperatures are below 70°F, making it a short season opportunity in Western Montana.



Apple Rosemary popsicles



Right: Strawberry Popsicle

POPSICLE-MAKING SUPPLIES

Commercial Juicer and Immersion Blender

Karl and Darci bought a commercial juicer and an immersion blender to extract juice from fruit for the popsicles. The immersion blender is used to pulverize any pulp left in the popsicles and to mix in added sugar. Both work perfectly for their business.

Popsicle Cart

Karl and Darci bought a travel-size commercial freezer with cold plates to use as a popsicle cart. It was important that the cart be relatively lightweight and easy to maneuver through crowded markets. The cart is insulated and keeps temperatures between -15 and -20 degrees F. It has a small hatch on its top so the popsicles can be easily accessed without opening the entire cooler.

Ataforma Michmid Popsicle Molds

Popsicle molds come in many sizes and shapes. Flare Pops uses a Michmid style mold from Ataforma. The Michmid mold is made of stainless steel and has 26 3.8 oz cavities. For reference, a standard popsicle in the store is about 3 oz. Karl has been very happy with how simple the mold has been to use.

RESULTS

Several other investments were necessary to support the Flare Pops enterprise. When they started in 2017, Karl and Darci invested in a specialized popsicle freezer and extraction unit, which cost about \$7,500. That first year they used the Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center in Ronan for processing, but in 2018 they opted to add a small commercial kitchen to their home. This was a \$10,000 long-term investment which allows them to store fruit on site and to make popsicles in the evenings or when farm work is slow, saving time and travel costs.

Even with these additional investments, the Flare Pops enterprise has resulted in an additional funding stream for Fresh Roots Farm without significantly increasing Karl or Darci's workload or diminishing sales of first-quality fruits. The added revenue in the first year was more than \$10,000 gross. In year two the business gross revenue grew by 110%. As a bonus, Flare Pops even gets their daughter involved as their number one salesperson! Karl and Darci recommend value-added products to supplement farm income and to reduce food waste.



Popsicle cart used at farmers markets

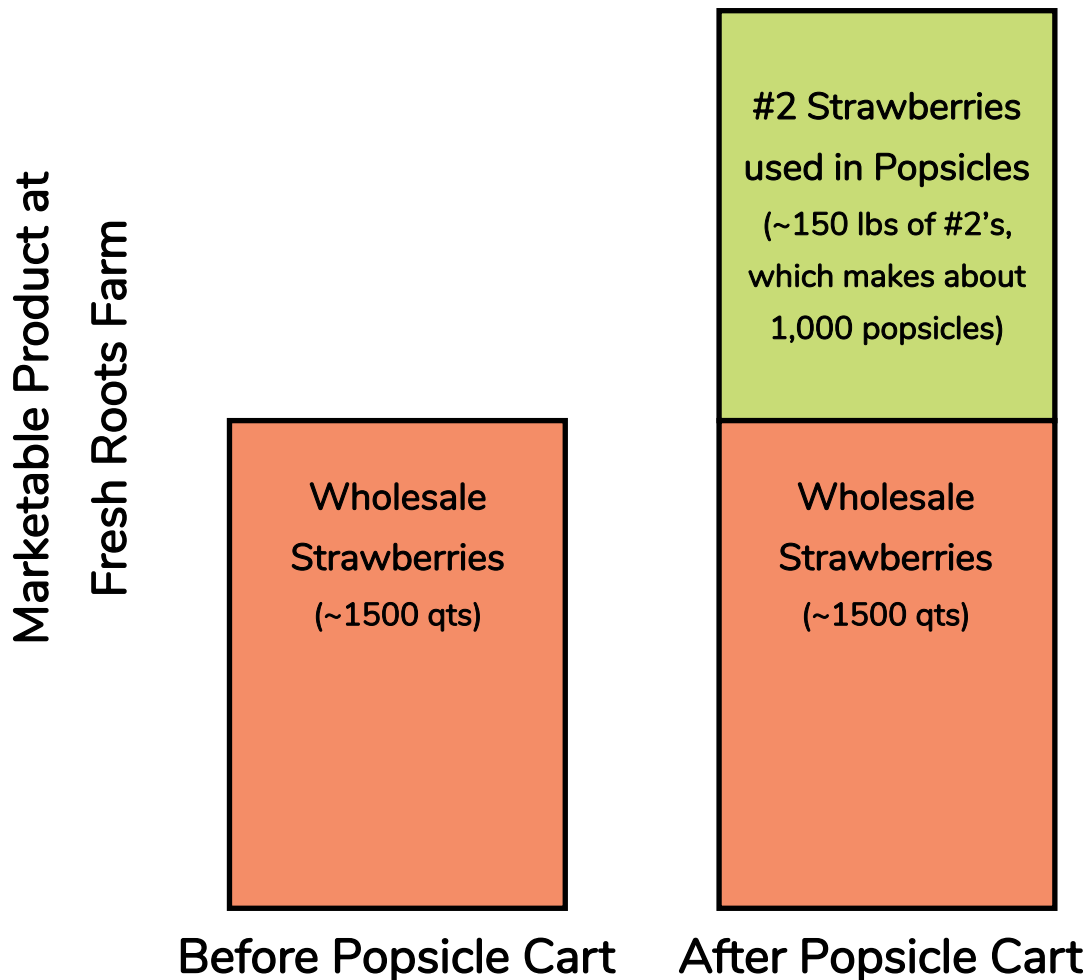


The top hatch of the popsicle cart



Ataforma Michmid popsicle molds

EXAMPLE OF AN ADDITIONAL MARKETABLE PRODUCT: STRAWBERRY SECONDS AS POPSICLES



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Montana Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program: The purpose of this program is solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in Montana. Visit their website to find funding opportunities and more information. Search [Montana SCBG](#).

Farm Link Montana: A project of the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition to connect Montana's beginning farmers and ranchers with the tools they need to succeed: farmlinkmontana.org

Field Tested Reports and Videos: Find more reports about other projects and see videos of tools in action at the [Field Tested webpage, under Resources on FarmLinkMontana.org](#)

