

MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER



IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 3

Air Source Heat Pumps

PAGE 4

When You Save,
We All Save

PAGE 5

Go Paperless

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PROSPECTS RESTAURANT BRINGS FRESH FLAVORS TO LITCHFIELD

Litchfield's dining scene welcomes a new addition with the opening of Prospects, the latest venture from seasoned restaurateurs Colin and Drea Kuechle. Building on the success of their first restaurant, Keeks in Watkins, the Kuechles bring their passion for quality food and exceptional service to this new location.

Colin began his culinary career at 14 as a dishwasher at Lido's Pizzeria in Plymouth. Despite initially pursuing economics and accounting in school, he couldn't ignore his passion for cooking and shifted to culinary arts and restaurant management. Colin worked his way up to become an executive

sous chef at the Edgewater Hotel and later played a pivotal role in expanding Noodles & Company from four restaurants to over 500, contributing to its public offering.

Drea met Colin while working at Noodles & Company. She brings her own expertise and enthusiasm, having risen from an entry-level position to area manager, traveling extensively to open new restaurants. Together, they have cultivated a vision that emphasizes quality, consistency, and a deep respect for their team and patrons.

Continued on page 2...

PROSPECTS CONTINUED...

Their first venture, Keeks, was born out of a desire to offer high-quality, scratch-made American food in a small town. Keeks' success built their reputation and set the stage for Prospects in Litchfield, where they aim to provide a fresh, family-friendly dining experience with a commitment to quality.

"Our goal is to be the place where people celebrate life's moments," Drea explained. "We want families, friends, and everyone in between to feel at home here." The restaurant's ambiance is described as an "older building with a fresh feel," thanks to extensive renovations, particularly to the entryway.

The Kuechles emphasize their commitment to quality and consistency, taking a measured approach to menu expansion. While currently focused on perfecting their core menu, they envision eventually offering high-end dinners featuring steaks, seafood, and creative culinary experiences. "We're focused on expanding our menu gradually, ensuring that every new dish we introduce meets our high standards. 29-06-403 Training our team thoroughly is key to delivering a consistently excellent dining experience," Colin said. This attention to detail is already paying off, as evidenced by the quick sell-out of their newly introduced Reuben sandwich.

Key to the seamless operation of Prospects is their partnership with VIBRANT Broadband internet and VOIP services. "VIBRANT Broadband has been a game-changer for us. The fast and reliable internet connection allows us to manage reservations, process payments, and communicate seamlessly."

The Kuechles praise the reliability of the service and the responsiveness of the VIBRANT team, noting how it has improved connectivity issues in their building, allowed them to manage calls efficiently, and handle the demands of a busy restaurant. "We couldn't have asked for better support," Drea shared. "The VIBRANT team, especially Nathan and Dave, went above and beyond to help us set up our systems efficiently. Their responsiveness and expertise made a huge difference."

"Technology plays a vital role in our day-to-day operations. With VIBRANT broadband, we're able to streamline our processes and focus on what we do best—serving great food to our community," added Colin.

Colin and Drea have experienced firsthand the benefits of VIBRANT services at both Keeks and Prospects. The consistent performance, coupled with exceptional customer

support, has been greatly appreciated. "We've had our share of challenges with other vendors, but VIBRANT has been rock solid," Colin added. "From quick installations to problem-solving, they've been a reliable partner."

The Kuechles highlighted how VIBRANT's team went above and beyond during the restaurant's setup, particularly in resolving issues with their point-of-sale system. This level of support has been consistent across both their restaurants, making VIBRANT a trusted partner in their business growth.

As Prospects grows, the Kuechles envision it becoming a destination for special occasions and fine dining experiences in the area, bringing a taste of culinary sophistication to rural Minnesota. Colin and Drea invite the community to "come see us and grow with us." They promise that each visit to Prospects will showcase improvements and additions to their offerings. The couple is committed to creating a welcoming atmosphere where both staff and customers genuinely enjoy their experience.

As Colin and Drea reflected on their journey, they expressed gratitude for the support from the Meeker Cooperative community. "We're excited about the future and thankful for the partnership with VIBRANT," Drea said. "Our goal is to continue delivering exceptional dining experiences and to grow alongside this wonderful community."

Prospects stands as a testament to the Kuechles' dedication and the power of strong community partnerships. With a clear vision and unwavering commitment to quality, Colin and Drea are poised to make Prospects a beloved Litchfield institution.



**FIND YOUR
LOCATION
NUMBER**

Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Cooperative before August 31, you will have \$10 credit to your account. When you call and verify your information is correct in our system, you will also receive an additional bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar Panel.



Air Source Heat Pumps: A Smart Choice for Heating and Cooling



Air source heat pumps (ASHPs) are an efficient solution for both heating and cooling your home. These systems transfer heat between your house and the outside air, providing warmth in the winter and cool air in the summer. They are known for their energy efficiency, reducing electricity consumption and lowering utility bills.

Keith and Jean Schultz, long-time Meeker Cooperative members, installed an air source heat pump in May 2022 after their air conditioning unit broke down on the first hot day of spring. "Consistent heating and cooling" is the biggest benefit they have experienced. Despite the higher initial cost of the equipment, Keith and Jean trusted the recommendations of Brian and Tim from Servin Plumbing and Heating and opted for the heat pump and Meeker Cooperative's load management services. This decision earned them a \$1,050 rebate from Meeker Cooperative and continues to save them money on their electricity bill with a lower rate through the off-peak program.

"We've also been very happy with how you can heat and cool with the same unit. It's our primary heat source until about Thanksgiving," Keith shared. "That's when we finally turn on our propane furnace."

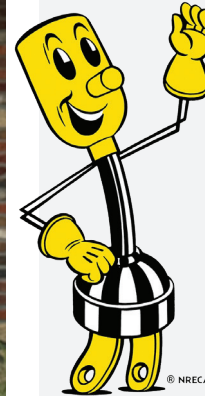
The Schultz family also appreciates the benefits of the load management program, which helps Meeker balance their usage load and keep prices down. Their off-peak electric boiler for in-floor heat and off-peak air source heat pump have proven effective. Keith highlights, "I always tell people about the heat pump and how it differs from an air conditioner. I've convinced a number of friends to explore air source heat pumps."

Having been members since 1974, the Schultzes are firm believers in the Cooperative's services. 22-27-301 Keith encourages others, "The answers are there, just ask the questions!"

LEARN MORE

To learn more about Air Source Heat Pumps or Meeker Cooperative's load management programs call our Energy Services experts at 320-693-3231 or visit www.meeker.coop/programs/.

WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT



Alessandro Volta, an Italian physicist, made a groundbreaking contribution to the field of electricity in 1800 with his invention of the first chemical battery, called the voltaic pile. This innovative device consisted of alternating zinc and copper discs, separated by pieces of cloth soaked in saltwater, which facilitated the flow of electric current. 30-11-226 Lynne Lundquist Volta's invention not only demonstrated that electricity could be generated chemically but also laid the foundation for future advancements in electrochemistry and battery technology.

MEMBER NEWS

OFFICE CLOSED

Meeker Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, September 2 in observance of Labor Day.

PARADES

Meeker Cooperative and VIBRANT Broadband enjoy participating in community parades because it's an opportunity to connect with the members we serve and showcase our commitment to the community. We love seeing your smiling faces as our trucks come down the road!



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WHEN YOU SAVE WE ALL SAVE

Enroll in one of Meeker Cooperative's Energy Management programs by November 15, 2024, to be entered to win one of five \$200 bill credits on your December 2024 statement.

To be eligible, your energy management system must be completely installed, operational, and checked out by a Meeker Cooperative energy services technician by November 15, 2024.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS AT:
www.meeker.coop/programs/

FEATURED RECIPE

PEANUT BUTTER RICE KRISPIES | SUBMITTED BY: ROSALEA HOEFT



INGREDIENTS

- 1 C. White Karo Syrup
- 1 C. Brown Sugar
- 2 C. Peanut Butter
- 5 C. Rice Krispies
- 1 C. Butter
- 1 Small Package Instant Vanilla Pudding
- 6 Tbsp. Milk
- 4 C. Powdered Sugar
- 12 oz Package Chocolate Chips

DIRECTIONS

Melt Karo syrup, brown sugar, and peanut butter together. Fold in Rice Krispies then pack into a 9 x 13 pan and refrigerate. Beat together 1/2 cup softened butter, instant vanilla pudding, milk, and powdered sugar. Spread over first layer and refrigerate. When firm melt 1/2 C. Butter and chocolate chips. Spread over bars like frosting.

Submit your favorite recipe for our next issue! The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. DEADLINE: August 31, 2024. Email to: szeppelin@meeker.coop | Mail to: Meeker Coop, ATTN: Shane 1725 US Hwy 12 E, Ste 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

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Chad Felstul, Attorney

DISTRICT 8 DIRECTOR POSITION OPEN APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

The District 8 seat on Meeker Cooperative's board of directors is open. District 8 includes the following townships: Darwin and Ellsworth in Meeker county.

Meeker Cooperative's bylaws specify that the Board of Directors may appoint a member to fill any open board seat. Once appointed, the Director will serve until the next Annual Meeting, at which time the seat will be up for election by the membership of the district to fill the unexpired term.

If you are interested in applying for the District 8 Director position, the Director Qualifications and the Application Form may be found on Meeker Cooperative's website at www.meeker.coop. Select Member Services at the upper left and then Download Forms from the dropdown menu. Click on the Director Application packet to download the materials. You can also call Mary Alice Holm at 320-693-3231 to request a packet.

The application deadline is close of business (4:30 p.m.) on October 4. Selected applicants will be notified and will be interviewed in person by the Board of Directors on Monday, October 28.



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- No fees – you can pay your electric bill online for free. 24-23-347 Save yourself a stamp and pay online.
- Cut down on paper clutter in your home.
- Easily review your electric usage, payment and billing history.

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meeker.smarthub.coop

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Keep up-to-date with your Cooperative in-between issues of the Pioneer and browse our classifieds online at:

www.meeker.coop/news.