

Brat Dogs are BIG time

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The idea of dunking a delicious bratwurst in a cornbread batter and deep-frying it first came to local entrepreneurs in 2018.

Fast forward four years and the idea-on-a-stick is one of the hottest food items at multiple venues, including Huntington Bank Stadium.

"We took the 60-year-old concept of a corn dog and made it better," Randy Splett said of the "brat dog" business he and his wife, Myranda (Pittmann), have created out of their home in Morristown with the help of a business associate. They named their business: Minnesota's Original Brat Dogs.

For months, they shopped around and taste-tested multiple bratwursts and cornbread batters.

They tried various combinations of products and different frying methods, and they held tastings for family members and friends, until finally, they found the winning combination.

"We get all of our brats from Steve's Meat Market in Ellendale," Splett stated proudly. "They're top quality—honestly the best brats I've ever had—and we're proud to support another small-town business."

Their brat dog stand served up their unique food at six events that first summer. Three main flavors of brats were offered—Minnesota wild rice and cheddar, original, and jalapeno pepper jack—plus, one or two limited flavors like blueberry and pizza.

"Our first event was Morristown's Dam Days, and I've got to give credit to Steve Nordmeier for that," Randy shared. "I

pitched the idea of us having a stand at Dam Days to him—we had only the idea, no equipment at the time—and he made it happen. I think he called me up and said something like, 'We'll let you in.' And, that's where we started."

The following season, Minnesota's Original Brat Dogs were served at 21 events, and brat dogs managed to snag the interest of the Minnesota Gophers.

"We were asked to do a tasting for Huntington Bank Stadium representatives, which we did in January or February 2020. Then, Covid hit," Splett explained. "We took the year off, and quite honestly, we didn't know if we were going to make it through Covid. But, during that time, we saw other food stands setting up in parking lots, which led to us knowing we needed to be mobile."

Instead of quitting, the Spletts decided to separate from their business partner and invest more into the business. They bought an old fire truck they planned to turn into a food truck at an auction, but before they could start transforming the vehicle, they were tipped off on the sale of a used food trailer and purchased it.

Becoming mobile meant not having to set up tents, tables, and cooking equipment at every event. Things became more efficient, more feasible.

The freshly branded Brat Dog food trailer debuted at Morristown's Dam Days in 2021, but it was at Elysian's Fourth of July Celebration that a Huntington Bank Stadium representative once again connected with Splett.

"We did another taste test for Huntington at the end of July,



Photo courtesy of Myranda Splett

The Randy and Myranda Splett family of Morristown are the owners of Minnesota's Original Brat Dogs, which now serves deep-fried brats at multiple venues, including Huntington Bank Stadium. Pictured: Randy and Myranda posed in front of their food trailer with their children (left to right): Hudson, Archer, and Adelaide.

and then, they said they wanted us up there," he explained. "It was a big step for us, a great way to get our product out there."

The Spletts were provided a 24-foot by 25-foot area in the West Plaza of Huntington Bank Stadium. Everything from fryers to coolers to prep areas, the family had to provide.

"Thankfully, my mom, Julie, was a cook for the school for 25

years and was able to help us set things up efficiently," Splett stated. "Everything else, we just figured out as we went."

But, there was no easing into the new venue.

The Brat Dogs stand opened at Huntington Bank Stadium on September 1. The Minnesota Golden Gophers were playing Ohio State, and the crowd was large.

"It was super scary at the time," Splett admitted with a shake of his head. "Thankfully, we had a great crew of workers there—12 of our cousins, friends, and family members... We were busy. But, now, we have a better idea of how things work, and now, we average about 500 brat dogs per game there."

Soon, other stadiums began inquiring about Brat Dogs, which led to more tasting events and meetings.

"One of his strengths is how he communicates with people. He is a talker," Myranda said. "He'd much rather talk to someone in person instead of over the phone, but if he can get in front of someone, usually, he wins them over."

Williams Arena was the next big venue to have a Brat Dogs stand, with brat dogs served throughout the 2021-2022 bas-

ketball season.

Sever's Corn Maze also recruited Brat Dogs as a vendor last fall.

Then, came US Bank Stadium.

"Brat Dogs will have two locations on US Bank Stadium's concourse this season—one on the main level in Section 111 and one on level three in Section 341," Splett announced. "It's exciting, and I hope our friends from this area come find us up there."

Mariucci Arena has also extended an offer to the Spletts.

When asked how it feels to have their business grow so quickly in such a short time, both Randy and Myranda smile at each other and shake their heads.

"Honestly, we're a bit shell-shocked," Splett stated. "It's already at the point that we have to decline some events, and we're working to find a good balance between the business and our family... It's good growing pains. We feel incredibly blessed to have a growing business and a great pool of employees."

The couple has three children—9-year-old Adelaide, 6-year-old Hudson, and 4-year-old Archer. Myranda is an educator in the Faribault School

District and Randy now operates Brat Dogs full-time from April through October. During the winter, he works for Center-Point Energy.

So, what's next for the up and coming brat dog? Splett continues "flirting" with other stadiums, and the family continues to play with "side options" such as fried pickles and tater tots, which they serve with their brat dogs when and where they can. The Spletts are also contemplating having their product manufactured for retail sales.

They've achieved a lot, but, for Randy, there's one more key bucket list dream—to have Brat Dogs at the State Fair.

"We've applied to the Minnesota State Fair, but so far, we haven't gotten word on if we're 'in' or not," Splett shared. "I'd sure hope we get in... Actually, I don't quite know how'd we make it work, but we would. It's the State Fair. It's like one of the biggest achievements for food vendors."

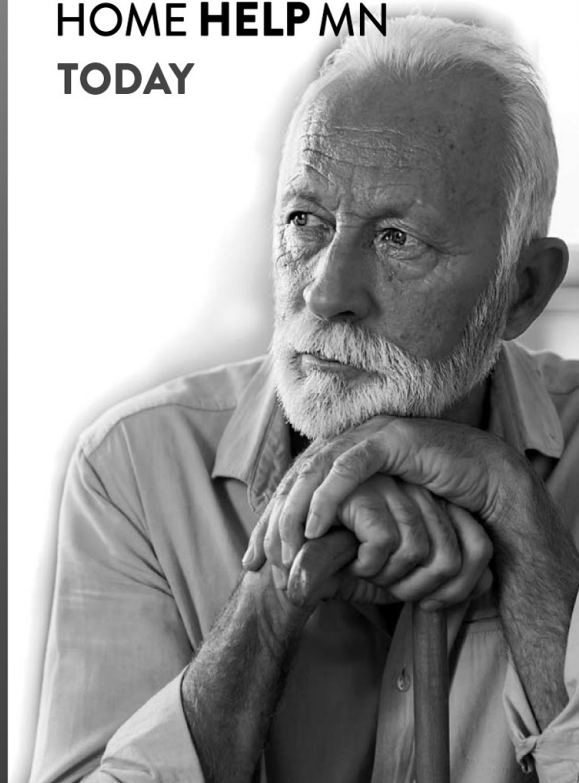
But, no matter how big they get, the Spletts promise to remain dedicated to their hometown and are committed to serving up their fresh, delicious product at Morristown's Dam Days, Waterville's Bullhead Days, and Elysian's Fourth of July this summer.



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Photo Courtesy of Tom Goetzinger

From left to right are Justine Jacobson, Kenny Nelson, and Lisa Murphy, The Singing Cowgirl. They were among those at KCHK's celebration of its 500th Live Musician Friday.

KCHK celebrates 500th Live Musician Friday

July of this year will mark 10 years that Tom Goetzinger has been the General Manager and morning person for New Prague's local radio station KCHK. One month after Goetzinger went on the air, he started featuring live music concerts on Friday mornings. The show is known as "Live Musician Friday" or "L-M-F," since August 2012, a live music offering has never been missed.

On Friday May 20, the 500th show was celebrated with a huge jam session held at the station northeast of New Prague. "Actually the May 20 show was number 511," explained Goetzinger. "The actual 500th show aired on March 4. We hold the big Jam Session to celebrate our milestone shows which requires the musicians to wait outside until it's their turn to play. That would have been difficult to do in March, so we had to set a date when the weather would cooperate." The weather on Friday, May 20, was a little cool and a little damp but the musicians were comfortable in the "outdoor greenroom" set up on the front lawn of the station.

The musicians participating in the event started showing up as early, 4:30 a.m., and a variety of live music was played on the



Photo Courtesy of Tom Goetzinger

Among the more than 50 guests at KCHK Radio's 500th Live Musician Friday were Jerry Minar, left, and Michael Hennen.

station from essentially 5 a.m. to 2 p.m. Music genres ranging from Polka, Classic and New Country, Rock and Roll, Gospel,

and others were presented throughout the show.

"I don't think there are too many radio stations you could tune into on that day which aired nine hours of live music. The variety performed was very representative of what the show has evolved into over the past decade and I was thrilled with the number of musicians who joined us for the celebration," stated Goetzinger. Over 50 musicians rolled through the studio. Many of them from the area, but some came from a distance, from communities such as Mankato, Fairbault, and from the metro area.

When asked about the future of the show, Goetzinger responded, "Well, we're already chopping wood on 600 in row and have identified that date as February 2, 2024, so it's full steam ahead!"

KCHK Radio went on the air in 1969 and is found at 1350 AM and 95.5 FM with an assortment of streams and apps. Live Musician Friday airs from 6:50-9:30 a.m. every Friday morning. Tom Goetzinger has hosted each show except for one.