



Over the last 20 years, The Craft Barn in Galesville, owned by Sharon Spahr, has become a go-to destination for cookie cutters, crafts and more.

NOT A “COOKIE CUTTER” BUSINESS

Sharon Spahr’s rural Galesville shop, The Craft Barn, replaces cows with crafts and so much more.

BY JULIE NELSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A talent for sewing, a passion for crafting and a desire for farm life. Few people could combine these loves into a successful business, but when Sharon Spahr gave it a try, she nailed it.

It all started around the year 2000, when taking her kids along to sell hand-sewn crafts at shows every weekend was no longer realistic. Undaunted, she figured if she couldn’t go to craft shows, there must be some way to get the craft show to come to her.

BUSINESS IN A BARN

She looked out the back of her farmhouse near Galesville, and The Craft Barn was born. Spahr kicked out the cows, cleaned, filled in the gutters and transformed the big, red barn into a retail space where she could sell her crafts. Working on consignment, local crafters helped supply the rest of the inventory. Eventually, Spahr reduced the number of consignors and started purchasing remaining merchandise from vendors.

Now regulars and tourists alike shop for handmade crafts, locally sourced jams, Christmas decor, greeting cards, T-shirts, earrings, flowers, outdoor chairs and more.

Oh, yes, and LOTS of cookie cutters. The Craft Barn boasts the largest selection of cookie cutters in the area.

A SPECIALTY TAKES SHAPE

The cookie cutter explosion resulted when a customer wanted more choices than what she could find locally and begged Spahr to be the supplier. Spahr accommodated.

“I have not regretted that decision,” she says. “I now have customers who drive two hours to shop for my cookie cutters.” Bakers can choose cookie cutters shaped in holiday themes, animals, sporting goods, vehicles, musical instruments, ballerinas and current kids’ cartoons. The Craft Barn Pinterest site offers ideas for decorating cookies made with each of the cutters (the dump truck uses Oreo cookies for wheels, for example), and Spahr loves seeing the pictures customers send of their creations.

INVITING SHOPPERS TO THE FARM LIFE

To date, people from all 50 states and four countries have stopped at The Craft Barn, discovering myriad treasures. In

addition to the crafts, visitors enjoy being on a real working farm, where they can feed the chickens, and the cows will lick their hands.

“I have filled four guest books since I opened in 2002,” says Spahr. “I love reading the comments; it’s a real pick-me-up.” In addition to praise for the shopping, guests often comment on the ever-present cats that are happy to be petted or even picked up and carried around the store.

A farm girl at heart, Spahr willingly works seven days a week and has plans to expand even further. “We want to add a fudge and ice cream shop in an empty building between the road and the barn,” she says.

Though the 65-year-old has no interest in retiring soon, she hopes one day one of her grandchildren will be ready to take over. In the meantime, Spahr says she’d rather be at home and in her Craft Barn than any place on earth. **CRW**

Julie Nelson is not much good at making crafts, but she sure enjoyed touring The Craft Barn!