

'Shop the Pig' in Edgerton and Milton

By Andrea Bloom
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Summer revellers looking for groceries at a store with a small-town, family-owned feeling, but with all the interesting variety and high-quality food of a big market, will find what they're looking for at Cowley's Piggly Wiggly.

Owners Jason and Angie Cowley have been in the grocery business, working with Piggly Wiggly stores, for most of their adult lives. (They first met while working at the Janesville store.) They now own two Piggly Wiggly stores of their own — in Edgerton and in Milton.

Their children have always been a part of the family business, too. Their oldest daughter, Ashley, was the store director in Edgerton before she married and moved away from the area. Their son, Jacob, who attends college at UW-Rock County, is involved at the Edgerton store, and their

high school-age daughter, Alyssa, works at the Milton store. It's what their family does.

"I kind of grew up in the business and enjoyed it," says Jason Cowley. "I like the people."

The Cowleys are also interested in good food and preparing it.

"I like to grill and smoke, and my wife's a really good cook," Jason says. Those interests explain the constant additions and improvements they make to their stores' offerings. For customers, that means a wide range of delicious choices, whether they want to cook or grill, or are looking for already-prepared foods for easy meals on fun-filled summer days.

Angie puts her love of cooking to good use as the deli manager at the Milton store. She also oversees both stores' delis and bakeries. Shoppers are often greeted with aromas of good things cooking and bak-



You are always greeted with friendly faces at Cowley's Piggly Wiggly, which has locations in Edgerton and Milton. (Photos by Toni Turnquist)

ing on site.

"In the deli, we do our own rotisserie chicken, and fried chicken also," says Jason. "We make most of our salads here in house. We bake our bread and doughnuts in-house daily."

A recent addition to the deli department expanded the variety of dips and heat-and-eat items.

"And we make a lot more grab-and-go items," Jason says. "That's something our customers were looking for."

For those who like to grill, there are many new possibilities to try.

"We've revamped our meat department," Jason says. "We do a lot more marinated and gourmet items. We make homemade brats and homemade burgers with bacon or bleu cheese," to name a few choices. "And we make six different types of kabobs," he says.

Jason's expertise in meat goes back to his earliest days working at a Piggly Wiggly store in high school and in college as a meat apprentice. He left college to follow the meat program. He says in that time, he worked at almost 30 Piggly Wiggly stores, learning from what he saw in each one. The knowledge he picked up along the way helps him to offer "hopefully the best shopping experience" to their customers.

Cowley's Piggly Wiggly features Gerber Amish chicken, a Certified Humane brand. Their beef is all Certified Angus, which Jason says is the highest grade of Choice you can buy.

"It's not just Angus beef like many of our competitors carry. It's the best of the best in Angus beef. To be certified, it has to meet many quality standards. That's why only higher-end restaurants carry it, too."

To help cooks make the most of that high-quality meat, the stores offer new and interesting items for grilling — starting with a recent expansion of the marinade and barbecue section to offer a growing variety of sauces and seasonings,

as well as specialty woods for achieving different flavors in grilled meat.

"With more and more people smoking proteins and using wood in their cooking, we have natural wood from hickory trees ... apple trees ... peach trees" — all popular items, Jason says. "A lot of people are cooking with wood now."

Shoppers will find a great selection of fresh produce to round out their cookouts and picnics, with emphasis on local and organic items. "We try to get as much local as we can," Jason says, buying from a number of local farms. Cowley's offers local corn, cucumbers, asparagus, apples and many other items in season. Those looking for organic produce will find some standard items all year round, with more varieties brought in seasonally.

Craft beer lovers will find a huge selection of Wisconsin and national micro brews, along with traditional beers. The Edgerton store is expanding its already room-size walk-in beer cooler this summer, to double its previous space.

"When it was built in 2005, there weren't that many micro beers, or that many varieties of traditional beers either," Jason says. Since then, the market has exploded with amazing new beers, and varieties of old favorites, and the Cowleys are expanding to carry even more of them. They also offer a large selection of wines and spirits, at a great value. "We feel that we have very aggressive pricing," Jason says, "some of the best pricing in the area, I would say with confidence."

For gardens, parties and entertaining, the Cowley's Piggly Wiggly stores carry local flowers and hanging baskets, as well as balloons and a wide selection of greeting cards. If your stove or fireplace runs low on propane, the Pig has it in 20-pound cylinders to buy new, or bring in an empty for exchange.

Cowley's Family Foods, Inc. is in its 16th year of business. It started in 2001 with the opening of Cowley's Piggly Wiggly in Milton. In 2008, the Cowleys built an addition there and remodeled the entire store. In 2014, they bought their second store, in Edgerton, from their long-time friends, Dave and Sandy Kotwitz.

"The Edgerton location



is the same store we left in 2001 to become owners of Milton," Jason says. "We always loved our coworkers and customers in Edgerton, so it made the decision to come back easy."

Jason and Angie credit a lot of the success of their stores to their loyal staff, many of whom have been with the stores for decades.

"We currently employ

over 150 people," Jason says. "Most are from the Edgerton and Milton area. We have many of the staff that have celebrated over 20 years of service with Piggly Wiggly."

"Our stores wouldn't be what they are without our great staff," he says. "We feel very fortunate to have and have had such great people be a part of our Piggly Wiggly family!"



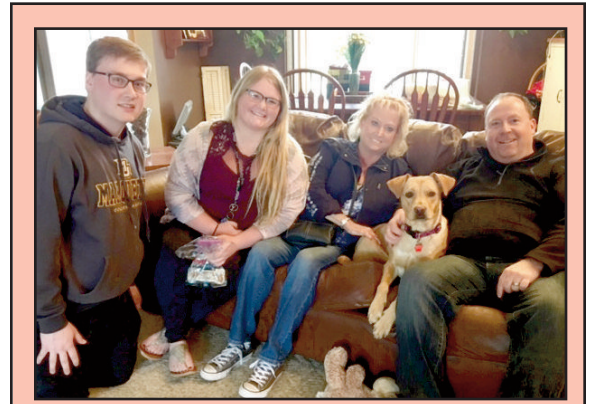
Rest assured Cowley's has you covered with extensive offerings of cheeses and other dairy products. This is Wisconsin, after all. (Photo by Toni Turnquist)



Baked goods to tempt your tastebuds at Cowley's Piggly Wiggly in Edgerton. (Photo by Toni Turnquist)



While in Edgerton, be sure to shop this Pig, located at 1211 N. Main St. (Photo by Toni Turnquist)



The Cowley family. (Submitted photo)

Meet the Cowleys

Jason

Jason Cowley has been in the grocery business since he was in high school. Next year will be his 30th year in the business. He started as a bagger, then cashier, produce clerk and night stocker before moving into the meat department. There he went from an apprentice to a journeyman meat cutter. "During this time I traveled to almost 30 different Piggly Wiggly stores," he says, "which taught me a lot about how stores should and shouldn't be run." He became a meat manager in Edgerton in 1993 and stayed in that role until 2000. "At that time I asked if I could move into store management so I could learn the grocery part of the business," he says. "I wanted to be ready if the opportunity of buying my own store became available." He became the assistant store manager, a position he held until April 2001. "On April 29, 2001, my wife Angie and I bought the Piggly Wiggly in Milton, Wisconsin," he says.

Angie

Angie started her Piggly Wiggly career in 1992 at the Janesville Piggly Wiggly as a deli clerk. In 1993, when the owners of the Janesville store bought two new locations, Angie was promoted to bakery/deli manager of the Edgerton location, and she continued in that position until April 2001, when she and Jason bought their first Piggly Wiggly, in Milton. She now oversees both the Milton and Edgerton bakery and deli operations as well as managing the Milton deli.

Ashley, Jacob and Alyssa

The Cowleys' oldest daughter, Ashley, was 14 when she started working in the family business, and worked there during high school and college. She graduated with degrees in human resources and Spanish. She was the Edgerton store director until last September, when she married and moved out of the area.

Their son Jacob still works at both stores but mainly in Edgerton. He has worked in almost every department since he started at 15. He currently works in the meat and beverage departments. He graduated from high school last year and is just finishing his first year of college, where he commutes so he can continue to work at the stores. He plans to graduate from UW-Whitewater with a degree in business.

Alyssa, the youngest Cowley, is a junior in high school. Following in her siblings' footsteps, she started working in the family business at 15. She works primarily in the deli department but has also worked as a cashier and a utility clerk. She plans to go to college but has not decided where or what she will study.