

## First 'Wheat Safari' Brings Foodies to Kansas

More than 20 bloggers and columnists from across the nation gathered in Manhattan this week to participate in the first-ever "Wheat Safari," sponsored by the Wheat Foods Council.

Wheat Safari participants were registered dietitians who are considered "influencers" in the field of food and nutrition. They have gained an active following in the health/nutrition/food community through social media outlets like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or blogs. Many had authored books or articles, or appeared on television or radio.

The Wheat Safari educated these influencers about wheat foods, from their beginnings on a wheat farm, through the milling process and as healthy, nutritious foods on the plates of Americans. Participants were introduced to the resources and expertise of the Wheat Foods Council (of which the Kansas Wheat Commission is a dues-paying member), the Kansas Wheat Commission and the Home Baking Association, by participating in several hands-on activities, including a gluten lesson by HBA's Sharon Davis; a pretzel baking workshop at the American Institute of Baking and a tour of the Hal Ross Flour Mill at K-State, plus a tour of the Farm to Market Bread Company in Kansas City.

The group toured the Chapman-area farm of Ken Wood, a director on the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers. Ken and his wife Deb hosted a luncheon and combine rides for Wheat Safari guests, most of whom had never seen a wheat field up-close.

Wood had saved about five acres of standing wheat in order to give the bloggers a combine ride. A few minutes in the cab of a combine with 25 food writers provided several teachable moments for Wood, who talked about the life cycle of Hard Red Winter wheat, how farmers care for crops, and the future of wheat production. This was the first-ever combine ride for most of the participants, and an important lesson in how Kansas wheat producers help to feed the world.

"The Wheat Safari participants were engaged, curious and asked great questions throughout the combine ride," Wood said. "It was a great opportunity to reach out to folks who have likely never met a wheat farmer before."

Participants kept their Twitter and Facebook followers up-to-date throughout the three day tour. For example:

- Jenny Shea (@jennyshea), a registered dietitian at Shaw's Grocery stores in New England, tweeted a photo of fellow blogger Jill Weisenberger, from Florida; and Ken Wood from the combine.



*Chapman farmer Ken Wood hosted several food bloggers/dietitians for combine rides during the Wheat Safari, June 20 in Kansas. The event was sponsored by the Wheat Foods Council, of which the Kansas Wheat Commission is a member.*

- Toby Smithson, a contributor to *Food and Nutrition* magazine from Chicago, updated her Twitter feed several times throughout the wheat tour, with tips from the Home Baking Association and lessons from the farm.
- And Regan Jones, owner of a nutrition communications and food marketing business in Alabama, promoted K-State's Bakery Science program to her 2,200 Twitter followers, mentioning that K-State is the only university in the nation to offer the degree, and that every graduate finds a job in the industry.

*To catch up on Wheat Safari activities, check #wheatsafari on Twitter.com*