

Local Beer, Cheese Go Organic

FORTUNA – Two Humboldt County businesses are teaming up to market their organic products that go together like wine and cheese – er. Beer and cheese.

The Eel River Brewing Co. in Fortuna now produces an organic amber beer along with its other popular ales. And Loleta Cheese Factory in Loleta has added organic cheddar and jack cheeses to its long line of cheese products.

Ted Vivatson of Eel River Brewing said he's confident the organic amber beer will be a best-seller. "This is the first certified organic beer not only on the North Coast but in all of California," Vivatson said. "Since it was introduced ... it has been popular with our brewery customers and with our distributors."

Carol Laffranchi of Loleta Cheese Factory also expressed enthusiasm for their new organic cheeses being produced. "We are making organic, mild, medium and sharp cheddars, and Monterey and jalapeno jack cheeses," Laffranchi said.

Loleta Cheese first introduced its organic line in September. Weel River began selling its organic brew in the spring.

Organic certification is a lengthy process that must be documented and renewed annually. In addition, organic ingredients are more expensive and thus, in some cases, the products are slightly more expensive as well.

"These new products represent a commitment on our part to provide wholesome products to our customers," Vivatson said. "I think Humboldt County will see many benefits from local organic products."

Loleta Cheese Factory's organic cheese is certified by Quality Assurance International of the West Coast. Eel River Brewery's organic beer has met the standards set forth by the California Certified Organic Farmers.

Eel River Brewery was founded in December 1995 and employs approximately 25 people. Loleta Cheese Factory was established in November 1982 and employs 28 people.

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