

Mint green colored pistachio-flavored milk soon might become a standard in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Dairy Store.

It will, at least, if everything goes according to the plans of two food science and technology students who visited southern India this summer and learned how to create the milk. The trip by Yulie Meneses and Alex Nelson was the result of agreements signed between UNL and two universities in India.

The agreements with Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS) in Chennai and Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University (SVVU) in Tirupati allow for faculty and student exchanges. Vice chancellors and faculty members from both institutions have visited UNL, and one visiting faculty member from TANUVAS recently conducted research on ways to ensure the safety and extend shelf life of indigenous Indian dairy products.

Meneses, a graduate student from Ecuador, and Nelson, a senior from Omaha, were the first UNL students to visit India as part of the agreements. During their monthlong visit in July and August, they visited both universities and four area dairy plants.

“We were sent to learn about India's dairy products and how they were prepared,” Nelson said. The purpose of the trip was to “put teeth into” the agreements, said Rolando Flores, head of the Department of Food Science and Technology and director of The Food Processing Center.

“We treat these agreements seriously,” Flores said, explaining that a relationship with Indian universities is beneficial in terms of shared knowledge and exposure to global markets that could promote economic development opportunities in Nebraska.

Meneses and Nelson spent much of their time learning about the variety of dairy products in India, where dairy is the most successful food industry organized as a co-op and owned by the milk producers. After watching Indian products being developed, they made the products themselves.

“The idea was to get two products that could be produced in Nebraska,” Meneses said.

They decided the two products they would develop here would be pistachio-flavored milk and gulab jamun, a popular Indian dessert.

Flavored milk is common in India, and Meneses and Nelson enjoyed much of what they sampled, including almond and pistachio flavors. They decided on pistachio because it is a popular ice cream flavor in the United States and they felt that popularity would transfer to milk.

Gulab jamun may be a harder sell, they said, but it is tasty and should find a market once people try it. Resembling a donut hole, it is created from a dough made with khoa—condensed milk—and served in a sugar-rich syrup.

Before the products can be sold at the dairy store, Meneses and Nelson will serve them at a seminar they will give this fall to food science administrators, faculty and students. They also need to get the green light from Flores, who said he hopes Indian food products could be available in the store by the end of this year.

Flores hopes more UNL students will be able to visit India to learn about food processing. The trips are financed through department and NU Foundation funds as well as private donations.

“Every student who goes overseas gets life-learning experiences that will stay with them the rest of their lives,” Flores said.

In the meantime, UNL will continue to host visiting Indian faculty members, Flores said. The Indian faculty benefit by learning more about American food processing and equipment. UNL benefits by being exposed to new techniques shared by the Indian faculty and the knowledge

gained through their research, Flores said.