



In college, a friend had Todd Rahr over for a holiday dinner.

“They had Italian heritage, so they made manicotti,” said Todd, who works as NorthWestern Energy’s Community Relations Manager in Missoula, Montana. “I was hooked at that point, and I had to learn how to make it.”

Todd joined NorthWestern Energy about a year ago. He describes his job as Community Relations Manager as being a conduit between NorthWestern Energy, our employees, the community and local government.

“It really is being a big part of the community,” Todd said.

Todd has a degree in sports industry leadership from Ohio University. After college, he worked all over the country with minor league baseball teams.

“A lot of what I did was work with government agencies and the community,” he said.

Todd ended up in Missoula thanks to a job with Learfield and Grizzly Athletics. During his six and a half years in that position, Todd got to know Steve Clawson, who previously served as Community Relations Manager in Missoula.

“Steve and I became good friends and golfing buddies,” Todd said. “He always used to tell me what a great job this was.”

Steve passed away in December 2022. He was a staple in the community and was well-loved and admired.

Todd is working to fill the big shoes left by Steve and to do meaningful work serving our community.

Todd likes that his job is similar to what he did during his time with minor league baseball. Todd also likes that the energy industry is changing and advancing.

“It’s an exciting time to be in this industry because of all the change that’s going on,” he said. “It’s exciting to look forward to the next 20 years.”



Sausage Manicotti

INGREDIENTS

15 ounces skim ricotta cheese	1/2 teaspoon pepper
8 ounces mozzarella cheese (shredded)	1/2 teaspoon oregano
4 ounces cream cheese	1 box manicotti noodles (12-14 shells)
1/2 cup parmesan cheese (shredded)	4 cups marinara sauce
10 ounces Italian sausage	1/2 cup parmesan cheese (for topping)
2 large eggs	8 ounces mozzarella cheese (for topping)
1/2 teaspoon salt	

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook the manicotti shells as directed. Brown the Italian sausage in a skillet on the stovetop.
- 2 In a large bowl, mix cheeses, sausage, eggs, salt, pepper, oregano. Stir until well blended.
- 3 Stuff the shells with the mixture and place in a large glass casserole dish with a layer of marinara sauce under the shells.
- 4 Once all shells are in the pan, pour marinara on top of the shells and place parmesan and mozzarella cheese for topping over the top.
- 5 Cover with aluminum foil and place in oven to bake for about one hour.
- 6 Once done to your liking, open a bottle of red wine and enjoy.

NOTES

- I never use exactly what is in the recipe. I almost always use more of each item and eyeball.
- I like the mozzarella on top to be bubbling before I remove the pan, usually finishing the dish for about 3-5 minutes without the foil on top.

CONTACT US

MONTANA
 Customer Contact Center 888-467-2669
 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
 Emergency 24/7 Service 811
 Call Before You Dig
 Energy Efficiency 800-823-5995

NEBRASKA
 Customer Contact Center 800-245-6977
 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
 Emergency 24/7 Service
 Call Before You Dig 811

SOUTH DAKOTA
 Customer Contact Center 800-245-6977
 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
 Emergency 24/7 Service
 Call Before You Dig 811

PAYMENT
 Paymentus Automated
 Phone Payment Option:
 (via checking, savings, credit or debit card)
 English: 833-970-2262
 Spanish: 833-970-2263

CONSTRUCTION CENTER
 1-83-FOR-BUILD (1-833-672-8453)

[NorthWesternEnergy.com](https://www.northwesternenergy.com)



We are proud of the diversity in the communities we serve. To better serve the needs of some of our customers, we translate important customer information into two languages: Spanish and Karenic.

Estamos orgullosos de la diversidad en las comunidades que servimos. Para satisfacer mejor las necesidades de algunos de nuestros clientes, traducimos información importante del cliente a dos idiomas: español y karenic.

ပညာတော်အသုံးဆောင်သူများအတွက် ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏ ဂျပန်ဘာသာစကားပြောသူများအတွက် အရေးကြီးသော အချက်အလက်များကို အသေးစိတ်အဖြစ် အကျဉ်းချုပ်ဖော်ပြပါမည်။ မြောက်ပိုင်းတိုင်းဒေသကြီး၏ မြို့တော် နှင့် အခြား နေရာများတွင် အရေးကြီးသော အချက်အလက်များကို အသေးစိတ်အဖြစ် အကျဉ်းချုပ်ဖော်ပြပါမည်။

Energy Connections Editor
 11 E Park St, Butte, MT 59701
news2@northwestern.com

Energy Connections

Customer Bill Insert
 South Dakota/Nebraska | February 2024

In this issue: Investing in reliability and resiliency | Home solar information | Sausage Manicotti Recipe



Bright ideas to save

Turn back your thermostat

Save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling by simply turning back your thermostat 7°-10°F for 8 hours a day from its normal setting.



Investing in reliability and resiliency

In January, temperatures plummeted across our service territory. Thanks to decades of planning and investments, we kept the heat and lights on for our customers.

For the last decade, grid resiliency has been a major focus for NorthWestern Energy. Enhancing and hardening our system prepares us for extreme weather like the Arctic blast we experienced last month. It improves reliability for our customers and helps meet our service territory's growing energy needs. NorthWestern's infrastructure investment has more than doubled over the last decade. In 2023, NorthWestern Energy put nearly \$560 million into capital investments in the system that serves our customers and spent \$338 million in operations, maintenance and general expenses across our service territory.

We understand reliability is critical, which is why we have invested more than \$4 billion into our energy delivery platform since 2011. Despite the challenges posed by our rural service territory, our reliability consistently outperforms that of our industry peers.

Considering solar panels? Here is some important information.

Adding solar to your home is a big financial decision. Make sure you do your homework before you enter into a contract with a solar installer. Recently, we've seen a rise in aggressive and confusing marketing tactics. Most solar providers are honest and fair. However, there are some red flags to watch out for, and if a claim sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Watch Out for False Claims

If a solar installer makes these false claims, we recommend finding someone else to do business with.

False Claim: You can get free solar energy at no cost.

The Truth: Solar panels are rarely free. Offers claiming to provide free solar panels or other services deserve a close look at the fine print. The federal government does not have any programs that install solar panels for free. However, there are legitimate programs, including loans, that lower the up-front costs.

False Claim: NorthWestern Energy will pay customers to install solar on their home.

The Truth: NorthWestern Energy does not offer incentives for solar installations for residential customers. This false claim is often seen on social media ads. Clicking on an ad directs the customer to an online qualification survey. This is a marketing tactic attempting to gather customers' information.

False Claim: You will never pay an electricity bill again after a solar system is installed.

The Truth: NorthWestern Energy customers who install home solar in South Dakota enter into a separate contract for payment. Customers receive payments for the excess energy they generate. The amount of money you can save with solar depends upon how much electricity you consume and the size of your solar energy system.

How do I know if solar makes sense for me?

Before installing solar panels, a good first step is to make your home as energy efficient as possible. Reducing your energy use can reduce the size of solar system you need, which could save you thousands of dollars.

There are three steps for determining if solar energy makes financial sense:

1. Determine how much electricity you use.
2. Analyze the available space for the solar energy system.
3. Calculate the cost of the system.

Step 1: Review your past electrical usage and determine how much electricity you use on average in a year. NorthWestern Energy customers can access two years of electrical usage data by registering for a My Energy Account at NorthWesternEnergy.com. You can then decide how much electricity you want to offset through a solar system. Most consumers try to offset between 25-75% of their annual electrical use.

For example, if you use an average of 10,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, and you want to offset 50% of that usage, you will need a photovoltaic (PV) system that produces 5,000 kWh per year.

Step 2: You'll need to determine the correct system size based on the average solar production for your area. In South Dakota, a standard fixed-mount PV system produces approximately 1,400 kWh of electricity per year for every one kilowatt of installed solar.

For example, in step 1, we determined we want to produce 5,000 kWh per year. Using the one kilowatt expected annual output of 1,400 kWh, the required system size is determined by taking the desired output (5,000 kWh) and dividing it by 1,400 kWh. In this case, that is 3.57, which means the solar array would need to be about 3.6 kilowatts. ($5,000/1,400=3.57$)

Next, you'll need to determine if you have enough roof space for a 3.6-kilowatt system and whether any trees or other objects shade any part of your roof.

Step 3: Determine the total cost of the system. A reputable installer will be able to provide you a complete, detailed bid outlining all costs. You'll also want to research federal PV tax credits. Next, calculate how much you will save on electricity with your solar panels.

For example, if your electric bill is about \$100 a month, and you expect to offset 50% of your electricity use with solar, you will save about \$50 a month, or \$600 a year. If your system costs \$10,000 (after tax credits), the payback time on your system will be 16.7 years, not including interest or additional costs associated with the

PV system. ($10,000/600=16.667$).

Resources:

- **Find a qualified installer** - The addition of a solar PV system is a significant investment to your home. NorthWestern Energy recommends obtaining bids from multiple qualified installers and also that you verify that the installer you select is using a licensed electrician to complete all electrical work.
- **Homeowner's Guide to Going Solar** - The U.S. Department of Energy offers resources for anyone considering solar generation. energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowners-guide-going-solar
- **NREL's PVWatts® Calculator** - The National Renewable Energy Laboratory has a free solar production calculator for homeowners. Input your location and system size; PVWatts will estimate monthly and annual generation. pvwatts.nrel.gov.

