We recently talked with Tom Nieman, president of Fromm Family Foods, about his family business, creating delicious food and craft beer brewing.

Q: Tell us about Fromm.

Nieman: Fromm has remained a family owned and operated business for four generations.

My sons, who represent the fifth generation, are now working diligently to learn all aspects of the operation.

Founded in 1904, Fromm has a rich history of quiet innovation. In the 1930s we introduced the first canine and feline distemper vaccines, and during the 1940s innovated the method of dry pet food production by cooking fresh meat and grain together to produce the convenient dry kibble form that is still so popular today. In the 1980s when pet owners expressed their preference for natural preservatives, we were one of the first brands to use natural tocopherols.

Today we manufacture three unique artisan lines of dog and cat food. In 2010 we opened a new manufacturing facility in Columbus, Wis., adding more than 60 jobs for Wisconsin workers and allowing our company to meet the growing demand for product.

Q: Your 82-year-old mother still works in the office a few days a week, and your sons are also involved in the business. What’s your secret to success when mixing family and business?

Nieman: We don’t know any better! Truthfully, this family business has been a source of pride for the Fromms and Niemans for generations. We were all given the opportunity to venture out in the job force prior to joining Fromm.

We have all chosen to remain with the family business, because we find it is very enriching and fulfilling to cultivate a business culture that is big on innovation and has such a rich heritage.

My wife Kathy is also an integral part of the business, and yes, my 82-year-old mother still comes in the office a few days a week. During the summer and semester breaks, many of my nieces work for us as well.

However, the Fromm family extends well past relatives at this point. We are blessed to have an amazing staff that has been with us for years, even decades.

Q: Fromm’s Four Star line of dog and cat food offers recipes like Grain-Free Beef Frittata Veg, Surf & Turf and Duck A La Veg. Where does the inspiration for these gourmet recipes come from?

Nieman: Our interchangeable Four-Star Nutritionals line has provided the perfect platform to introduce unique recipes that offer a wide variety of different meats, poultry and fish together with a multitude of fresh fruits and vegetables.

My family has always had a deep appreciation for good food, and we tend to have a foodie perspective on life. Being the head chef, I enjoy giving our entrees fun names that describe the high quality artisan nature.

Q: You’re currently renovating a house near the company headquarters that was previously owned by your family. Tell us about the restoration you’re doing on it.

Nieman: I was recently able to acquire my grandparent’s house that was built in 1928 and is located on the Fromm property in Mequon, Wis. I have so many childhood memories there and since it was sold by the generation before me it has been a dream to one day regain ownership.

Currently, we are working with skilled artisans and craftsmen to restore the house. Ultimately we plan to use it as a gathering place for meetings, company functions and to keep it in the family for generations to come.

Q: Pet food is not your only passion. We hear there is some craft beer brewing over there, too?

Nieman: My sons and I have a passion for creating high quality microbrew beers. We are members of a home brew club and I also brew with friends at a small brewing company in Cedarburg, Wis., just a stone’s throw away from Fromm.

We always say Fromm foods are similar to a craft beer. Very special attention is paid to the formulations and creation of these artisan blends. The same can be said for craft brewing. It’s a hobby that brings family and friends together and blends science and culinary passion - how can life get any better than that?