

## Taylor Cheese Updates Cut and Wrap Facility; Hoping To Grow With Its Customer Base

### Company Uses EPI Sanitary Food Grade Panels In Newly Doubled Production Area

Weyauwega, WI—On the back of a major plant upgrade, Taylor Cheese has positioned itself as a niche alternative for cheese marketers who want to get the jump on consumers as the economy begins to grow.

It is not out of the ordinary for a small business like Taylor Cheese to hunker down during rough economic times.

But seeing many of its cheese manufacturing clients expand their businesses, Taylor Cheese decided now was the perfect time to grow its business to match its clients' production.

Taylor Cheese wanted to create a win-win-win strategy for the cheese

He said the company can now handle more capacity and has the potential to be a little more versatile.

The plan was to upgrade space, equipment and transportation bays.

In addition, Taylor Cheese applied a poly board paneling system to its walls and ceilings that is easy to clean, sanitary and corrosion-proof, Ehrenberg said.

Taylor Cheese is owned by Jim Taylor and Robert Ehrenberg. Ehrenberg said the expansion was something both owners were fully committed to doing.

"This year's remodeling project wasn't something that was mandated," Ehrenberg said. "It was made in order to have a better facility for our current customer base and our future customer base. To show our employees that we are committed to staying in business for the long term.



manufacturer, the cheese buyer and, of course, itself by increasing the amount of cheese the company ran through its operation.

"As a small cut and wrap businesses we needed to become more productive," said co-owner Robert Ehrenberg. "Our customers' needs are growing, and the companies we buy our cheese from are growing. It was a win-win-win strategy."

Ehrenberg said his company is a small to medium-sized operation.

"I think our business has always been changing. Some of the customers we've lost over the years grew to a level where they needed more capacity than what we're able to provide."

In order to grow with their customers, and to recruit new business, Taylor Cheese expanded its production room from 1,100 square feet to 2,400 square feet.

Taylor Cheese is a private label, cut and wrap company that cuts from 1.5-ounce pieces to 10-pound prints.

Adding equipment was also an objective of the expansion.

"We knew we had to add some items and upgrade some equipment that would ultimately get us up to speed," Ehrenberg said.

And continue to improve upon areas in regards to food safety and quality."

#### History of Taylor Cheese

Taylor Cheese was started over 40 years ago to wrap cheese for the Great A&P Tea Company. Lowell "Abe" Taylor, started the company.

Jim Taylor, Abe's son, joined the company after leaving the Navy. Taylor Cheese started wrapping cheese for Churny Company and a few years later the company was sold to Churny. Abe retired and Jim became a partner in Churny in charge of the Weyauwega Operation.

When Taylor left Churny in 1983 he decided to put his focus back on the facility his father started.

When Ehrenberg joined Taylor Cheese in 1988, the company was cutting and wrapping product for different accounts throughout the US.

#### Still Catering To Niche Runs

While Taylor Cheese expanded the facility this past year, the company, through the years, has continually upgraded its equipment to better serve its customers, Ehrenberg said.

Most of the business Taylor does comes through distributors.

"We cater more to the smaller runs," Ehrenberg said. "Typically the

runs have more changeovers. That is our niche."

The expansion enables the company to get certified in organic cheese and is currently interested in working with a couple of customers.

"The whole idea of the expansion was to grow and if it means for us to grow in different areas and in new areas that would be fine."

Another area, shredded cheese, is close to being incorporated with the slicing and the chunks.

"We're getting into the shred business real soon with a small shredder and a gas-flush machine."

Ehrenberg said adding a shred line would allow Taylor's customers to house three chores under one roof.

"I think they're a lot of cheese operations that go to one shop to get their cutting and wrapping done, and getting their slicing done in another facility," Ehrenberg said. "This would allow our customers the opportunity to do their chunks and slices, as well as shreds, with one supplier. It's something we're real close to adding."

Ehrenberg said he receives requests from both sides of the supply chain.

"We get cheese makers in here all the time wanting to try something new," Ehrenberg said. "We're coming up with ideas that we're suggesting to our customers. And our customers come to us and want us to try and come up with a style of packaging or cut."

Ehrenberg said his company is perfectly suited for the rapidly growing volume of artisan cheese being made in the state.

"Our capacity has increased and we are looking for more opportunities to help people. Eventually those artisan cheese makers are going to need someone to help with their product," Ehrenberg said. "If it calls for some new cutting equipment, like wheels, we could expand to help them."

Taylor Cheese's customers are located throughout the US with distribution around the world, he said.

Taylor Cheese currently purchases all of its cheese from about 10 cheese plants in Wisconsin.

#### Procuring The Best

Taylor's cheese buyers count on Ehrenberg to procure the best cheese.

You can't beat the quality and consistency of the cheese we buy, Ehrenberg said.

"Hopefully by being in the business as long as we have has given us the opportunity to meet the cheese makers and build a relationship."

Ehrenberg said that the company buys on quality, customer service and a consistency.

"Though price has to be important, it's not the biggest factor. That is showing in the increased business we're seeing. People like to buy a quality product."

Consistency is also a major factor, Ehrenberg said.

"Consistency not only in quality, but in texture, moisture, dimensions. It really creates a more efficient process in the plant," Ehrenberg said. "It's a matter of starting a rapport with a factory and ordering product on a regular basis. Getting to know them, knowing their plants and operations and having a good feeling that you're receiving a consistent quality product. You have to trust that you are getting quality product each and every time."

#### Extrutech Plastics, Inc.'s Sanitary Poly-Board For Walls and Ceiling

The bright, clean look of Taylor Cheese's newly expanded facility can be attributed to the company's flow of equipment; the addition of natural sunlight as well as new overhead lighting.

Ehrenberg also credits a new paneling system that he said is very easy to clean, is sanitary and is corrosion-proof.

The Poly-Board paneling system is made in Manitowoc, WI, by Extrutech Plastics, Inc. (EPI).

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Ehrenberg said he travelled around getting feedback and looking at other paneling systems from cheese plants in the state.

He got an EPI reference from a company with multiple cheese plants.

"This product really seemed to fit the bill. It's not cheap by any means but compared to other options it's not any more expensive."

Ehrenberg said the paneling systems are made of a plastic material that is food grade approved, completely washable and it comes in two-foot panels that interlock together.

"We're very happy with it. I hope we'll see it hold up, which is the biggest concern. We'll see how it goes, especially in the high pallet traffic areas."

According to EPI the panels will never yellow and are very easy to clean.

"It's also the way we went with the ceiling," Ehrenberg said. "We were able to use the 2' X 4' Poly-Board ceiling panels because it is rigid enough. I think we made a good choice and the folks over there were really good to work with."

Ehrenberg said he was very happy with how the expansion turned out and has high hopes for future growth.

"We're out here, we've expanded and we have more capacity," he said. "We have a great, updated facility that we're proud to bring our customers to at anytime. They'll see a top-notch cheese cutting facility." **FR**