

House of Flavors Scoops up Business Across the Globe

MMPA products are making their way across the globe in the form of an icy cool treat manufactured by House of Flavors in Ludington, Mich. As one of the largest Michigan-based ice cream manufacturers, House of Flavors produces nearly 20 million gallons of ice cream per year, but only 5 percent of it carries their brand name. The rest of the frosty treats they make goes to private-label customers from across the United States, Puerto Rico, Portugal and occasionally other parts of Europe. Contracts with Royal Caribbean and Carnival Cruise Lines have House of Flavors ice cream literally sailing the globe.

“Our business stays steady year-round because we do all of the cruise lines in Florida and we ship ice cream to Puerto Rico – one of our largest customers is there,” says Pat Calder, House of Flavors Vice President of Operations. “We also

ship product to Portugal, Canada and sometimes to Europe.”

Producing ice cream, frozen yogurt, sherbet and sorbet under other brand names means that House of Flavors doesn't just produce one formulation of chocolate, vanilla or other flavors; instead they have several recipes and formulations, each flavor following the specifications of each individual customer. One thing all of the dairy based frozen treats have in common is their base formulations use nonfat dry milk from MMPA.

“House of Flavors has been a good customer of MMPA for many years,” says Clay Galarneau, MMPA Director of Plant Operations and Manufactured Sales. “They have grown considerably over the last several years and have become a very significant customer of MMPA manufactured products. We ship several truckloads of nonfat dry milk to House of Flavors every month for use in their ice cream products.”

Michigan produced and grown ingredients, like MMPA nonfat dry milk, cream from local dairies and occasionally from MMPA, Michigan cherries and other Michigan products are used in as many of House of Flavors ice cream formulations as possible.

“We want to buy as many of our ingredients as we can from Michigan companies,” Pat says. “We like to support Michigan farmers as much as possible.”

As House of Flavors increases production capacity and sales of their products, demand for the Michigan ingredients they use increases, creating a win-win situation for the state.

“We are a Michigan company that is growing,” Pat says. “When a plant closes from another state, we go after that business and move that volume to Michigan.”

Sometimes that new business requires special equipment to package product into the customer's specified container, which may mean purchasing new filling equipment to fulfill the customer's needs. Nearly every size of container they fill – from the large three-gallon tubs you see in the ice cream parlor to the tiny half-pint bricks and everything in between – requires specialized filling equipment. To ensure their customer's products are manufactured quickly, efficiently and at the highest quality, the House of



Flavors team continually invests in upgrades to their plant and manufacturing equipment.

“All we do is other people’s ice cream,” says House of Flavors third generation ice cream maker Jeff Hackert. “Our vision is that we can produce your products for you and you can just worry about marketing your product.”

Many of the brands House of Flavors produces are for out-of-state customers, but there are a few brands that stay in the area that MMPA members might be familiar with in the retail market: Save-A-Lot, I.G.A., and House of Flavors brands. Brands in the three gallon ice cream parlor market: House of Flavors, Ashby Sterling, Kaleido Scoops, and Denny’s Restaurants.



The Scoop on House of Flavors

- Produces approximately 20 million gallons of ice cream per year
- Plant capacity of 5,000 gallons per hour
- Purchases most dairy ingredients and many other ingredients, like fruit, from Michigan farmers and businesses
- Regular customers include businesses in Puerto Rico, Portugal and several cruise ship lines, in addition to customers in the U.S.
- Most unique flavors produced: *Red Bean, Green Tea, Coconut*
- Most popular flavor: *Vanilla*

All in the Family – History of House of Flavors

From its humble beginnings as a small dairy plant processing a variety of dairy products in 1948, to its large-scale ice cream production capacity of today, House of Flavors has remained a family run operation.

In 1948, Bob Neal Sr. purchased half interest in Park Dairy (then called Miller Dairy) of Ludington, and moved his young family into an apartment above what is now the House of Flavors restaurant. When the business partner retired in 1959, the Neal family decided to begin focusing on ice cream production.

Bob Neal Jr. returned with a degree in Dairy Technology from Michigan State University in the early 1960s and the father-son team began turning the old bottling plant into an ice cream production facility that could produce 600 gallons of ice cream per hour.

The increased capacity allowed them to make a wide variety of ice cream flavors and the business name was officially changed to House of Flavors in 1964. During the 1970s, Bob Sr. partially retired and Bob Jr. expanded the business by opening up 12 ice cream parlors throughout Michigan with two business partners.

However, the partnership dissolved and the scoop shops were sold off in 1979 to private owners.

With its focus back on ice cream, House of Flavors slowly grew its business through grocery store distribution and private label co-packing. The co-packing business grew and helped the company through a rough financial time in the 1980s when the distribution end of the business was not lucrative.

Another family member, Bob Jr.’s stepson, Jeff Hackert, began working at House of Flavors in 1992. Through strategic partnerships and good business decisions, the company is once again a leader in ice cream production in Michigan, producing more than 20 million gallons of ice cream each year.

“When I joined the company, we were making 100,000 gallons of ice cream a year,” Bob Jr. says. “Now we are making 100,000 gallons a day.”

