

A Cow Starts It All; Then Kroger Takes Over

The most recent addition to Observerland's major industry shines with cleanliness and efficiency.

In the process, it handles a daily output of 30,000 of Michigan's best dairy cows.

The new Kroger Co. Dairy, located at 29600 Industrial Rd., Livonia, beside the Kroger warehouse, is the largest combined milk and ice cream plant in the United States.

Actually in operation for sev-

eral months, the plant was dedicated officially in three days of June Dairy Month festivities last weekend. Many Kroger officials from the food chain's headquarters in Cincinnati were on hand as Robert Montgomery, executive vice president, and Livonia Mayor Harvey W. Moelke joined in the opening.

PRECEDING the ceremonies were tours for press and stockholders of the 115,000 square

foot dairy plant, where 13,800 gallons of milk can be pasteurized in an hour and where no part of the consumer product ever is touched by any of the hundred or more employees.

"Sanitation is the secret of the dairy business," said Bob Johnson, who is Kroger's manager of regulatory compliance in the Cincinnati headquarters and served as one of the guides during the press tour. Everywhere in the plant were

evidences that this principle is gospel there.

Floors are wet most of the time from constant washing. Large tanks hold seemingly inextinguishable supply of cleaning fluid, which Johnson explained is pumped through all the equipment after each batch of milk is processed.

And the entire plant is connected by a series of pipelines that carry the milk and cream from process to pro-

cess, never touched by workers and rarely exposed to the air.

The number of steps needed before Mrs. Housewife takes that half-gallon of homogenized milk or pint of cottage cheese out of the supermarket cooler amazes each visitor.

FROM THE MOMENT the tank-truck, laden with raw milk picked up at one of Kroger's 12 collection centers around the state, pulls into the dairy plant garage, every step in the processing is precisely controlled.

At the intake point, the milk is checked for its butterfat content and to see if any water has been added.

Then it starts through its first series of pipes, a set of coils that is set to keep every particle of milk at 175 degrees Fahrenheit for 16 seconds for the pasteurizing process.

If anything goes wrong, the plant guide explained, the milk is automatically diverted back to the raw milk tank and the process starts over.

NEXT STOP for the pasteurized milk is a nearby tank where it is homogenized, or separated.

Then comes an intricate series of valves which direct the necessary amount of milk into huge tanks that hold the various liquid products—one for homogenized milk and others for skim milk, buttermilk, chocolate milk, low-fat milk.

The valves also send some of the milk on its way to be used for cottage cheese, sour cream and ice cream.

Waiting for processing or bottling, the milk is stored in four tremendous tanks that rise four stories and hold 25,000 gallons each. There also are two spare tanks.

Gadgets in the laboratory are marks of the careful attention paid to quality control.

There is a cryoscope to determine whether any water has been added, and a milk-taster to make a quick check of butterfat content. Another machine makes the Babcock test, which is the only government-approved method of determining butterfat, and a Mayonier tester to learn the amount of butterfat in solid milk products.

Laboratory technicians also check a sample of each dairy product for bacteria each day, and they repeat the tests on each one five days later and seven days later to assure safety in storage.

COTTAGE CHEESE is made in huge 4,800-pound vats, about four feet long and four feet high and stretching the length of a vast room. After the product is solidified with the addition of rennet, wires strung onto a frame make the giant cheese-cutters that divide it into large or small curd cottage cheese. After being processed and boxed, the non-frozen products are stored in a cooler room, where they are kept at a temperature of 36 to 38 degrees until being shipped to the stores.

ICE CREAM, mixed in batch- ing tanks by means of a wall gauge that determines the ingredients and flavors, get bored on a large conveyor line and they are stored in a refriger- ator room that is kept 30 degrees below zero.

When the creamery products are ready, they go by exact order to each of the Kroger stores in large areas served by the dairy.

Each order, computer-com- piled, is loaded with precision onto a small truck that can drive right into the rear door of the large delivery trucks backed up to the loading plat- form.

The Kroger Company, cele- brating its 85th anniversary this month, also plans to open a new dairy in St. Louis in September to add to its service in the mid-west.



LOTS OF CARTONS — Al Hall works on the conveyor belt that packs cartons full of ice cream.



COTTAGE CHEESE ASSEMBLY LINE — Bill Phillips covers cartons of cottage cheese and stamps each with the date it is packed.



PASTEURIZING COILS — Kroger executive Bob Johnson stands beside the set of coils that holds all milk at 175 degrees Fahrenheit for 16 seconds.



GIANT MEASURING CUP — This gauge operated by Don Cyrus determines the amounts of cream, sugar and flavoring in a batch of ice cream. Proportions can be changed by pushing the buttons below.



TESTING, TESTING — Laboratory technician Mrs. Ann Waino makes culture tests on all Kroger products daily.



HIGH-RISE STORAGE — Each of these storage tanks goes four stories up and holds 25,000 gallons of milk.

STORY By

Margaret
Miller.

PICTURES

By James

Hubbard.

Hoist Tourists

HANCOCK — One of the largest steam hoists in the world, which has not been used since 1931, was opened as a tourist attraction at the Quincy Mining Co. in the Upper Michigan town of Hancock.

The hoist weighs 1,765,000 pounds and once lifted 20,000-pound carloads of copper ore at one time from a 6,310-foot deep shaft.

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