

Spring Glen Farm Kitchen brings Pa. Dutch tradition to Farm Show

BY SALLY BAIR
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EPHRATA — Chow chow, corn relish, apple snitz and chicken pot pie are foods closely associated with the Pennsylvania Dutch tradition in Lancaster and surrounding counties. For Spring Glen Farm Kitchen these and nearly 100 other items are literally their bread and butter.

Visitors to the Pennsylvania Farm Show in Harrisburg will be able to purchase and sample some of these delicious items just by visiting the Pennsylvania Food Marketplace. The Marketplace has developed into one of the most sought out areas of the mammoth Farm Show because of the many specialty items which are featured there.

According to Paul Metzler, sales manager of Spring Glen Farm Kitchen, they decided to become a part of it from its inception. He recalls, "It was an unknown, and we wondered what would happen." Happily for both Spring Glen and

Farm Show visitors, the result has been beneficial.

Metzler says, "We go for the exposure. We talk to a lot of people from all over the state, as well as from areas where we have farmers' markets. It helps get our name before the public."

He explained that they sell some of their packaged products, but they also sell one-serving sizes of their famous cup custard and "eggsicles," which are red beet eggs on a stick. There are some other items available for immediate consumption.

Although the location of the Marketplace (in the Northeast corner of the complex) is sometimes hard to find, Metzler says it is becoming more popular year after year, and there are times when it is very crowded.

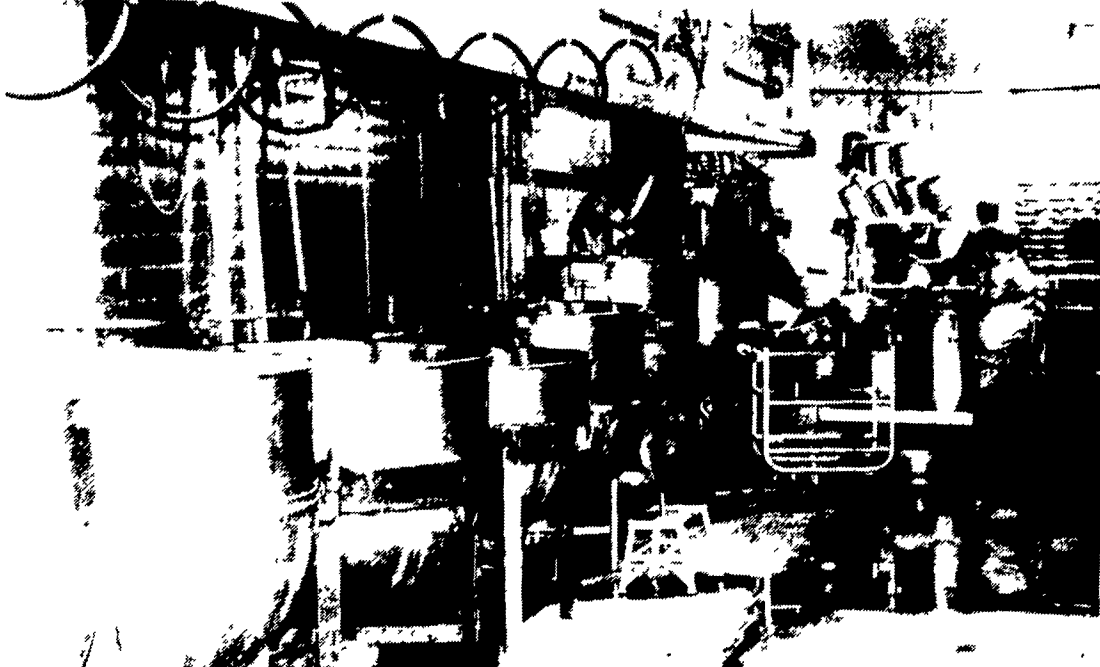
While Spring Glen is not directly in agriculture, Metzler says, "We are very close to it. The farmer produces it, but somebody has to sell it. We are the retail part of farming and feel we are closely



Spring Glen Farm Kitchen offers a no-sugar coffee cake which is highly popular with those who must watch the amount of sugar they consume. Here two employees measure out the batter for the coffee cake, including checking the weight for quality control.



Spring Glen Farm Kitchen, Ephrata, is well known throughout southeastern Pennsylvania for its wide variety of Pennsylvania Dutch foods. This display is just a small portion of the 100 items the company makes, including many perishable items like soups and chicken pot pie.



A view of the kitchens at Spring Glen shows the large pots used to produce a variety of foods from pickled red beet eggs to fruit spreads to chow chow. In the background, some of the employees are peeling potatoes, an almost never-ending job with the tons of chicken pot pie cooked there regularly.

identified with agriculture."

Spring Glen is also a participant in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's logo program, and has been one of six organizations nominated for recognition for the last three years.

Metzler says they are in total agreement with the logo program and they try to incorporate the logo whenever possible. They use it on product labels, letterhead, and invoices. "It makes people aware when they spot the logo, that the product is from Pennsylvania. It has been helpful," he points out. "We are producing in the local area for local people."

Actually, Spring Glen Farm Kitchen now serves an area which stretches from York, to Harrisburg, to Allentown to Coatesville. They operate out of 13 farmers markets, and have a large trade with restaurants and retail stores and gift shops. Metzler says they like their primary delivery area, which is a tight circle. "We've tried to concentrate on these areas."

Spring Glen was founded in the mid-40's by Titus and Edna Sensenig of Ephrata in their farm kitchen. Originally they sold their products door to door both in Ephrata and Reading, and then became involved in the old Ephrata Farmers Market.

Ironically, the product they started with, cup cheese, was discontinued a few years ago. But it was other Pennsylvania Dutch products for which they became famous, and the family operation has now grown into a family

corporation with 115 employees. Titus and Edna remain active in the corporation, with Titus serving as chairman. Son Kenneth is president, and son Dan is plant manager.

It was Edna who came up with the name Spring Glen Farm Kitchen, shortly before the business was incorporated in 1957. Ken recalls that she named it for the spring that was in a nearby glen and which was used for cooling the products. In fact, the spring is still channeled through the plant to assist with some preliminary cooling.

Ken remembers that he began working in the plants when he was just 10 or 12, and went along to the Ephrata market when he was just six. Many of the first street deliveries were made in a '41 Plymouth, and later they were made with a '47 panel truck.

He recalls using chipped ice in wooden boxes to keep the products cool. That was much different from the fleet of modern refrigeration trucks which now make deliveries.

In addition to the relishes well known among the Pennsylvania Dutch like chow chow, apple butter, red cabbage and corn relish, Titus developed a variety of fruit spreads in which they do not use sugar.

These have become very popular and were in response to his own diabetes. The company now also makes some no-sugar coffee cakes, which have found a receptive audience.

Non-perishables, however, made up just 15 percent of the food production at Spring Glen. The other 85 percent is perishable, and includes the famous chicken pot pie as well as a wide variety of soups, macaroni and cheese, the cup custards, red beet eggs, slaws and salads of wide variety. All of these products are sold fresh, and ingredients are purchased locally to the extent possible.

Although varieties of custards vary according to the season, most of the items remain the same throughout the year. Chow chow, for instance, is made every week of the year, and production is measured by the tons.

Metzler says Pennsylvania Dutch foods enjoy a great popularity because, "It is a distinct type of cooking. We have a saying among the Pennsylvania Dutch that first we put in the vinegar and then we put in the sugar. The Pennsylvania Dutch are known for being good cooks."

It is, in fact, these good cooks who are making the foods at Spring Glen. Metzler says, "We employ a lot of women who are good cooks in their own right. We duplicate as

nearly as possible the same kind of product you have in the home. The flavor is very important."

While all the foods are simple and familiar home cooking, the recipes are kept in a safe. Metzler says, "We are using the same recipes handed down in the family."

One big change over the years is that now the kitchens are federally inspected, and Metzler pointed out that once the recipes are submitted to the federal agencies, they must be followed. This means consistency for the consumer.

Metzler says the plant is currently being expanded to increase both cooling and storage capacity. He added, "I think we will continue to grow. Our growth will be steady, not spectacular. We will have time to plan and work at it."

He said they are always looking at new areas and new routes. He says they have always felt they are major contributors to a farmers' market, and when they make a decision to go to market, they make a major investment with the idea of staying and building a market.

The company continues to taste and test products, and will sometimes make trial batches of new items. Metzler says it is easy for them to get feed back on the success of a new item, because of their contact with customers week after week at farmers' markets. Occasionally they will discontinue old products and introduce new ones.

Metzler said that they depend on their weekly customers for the bulk of their business, but at markets some impulse buying takes place as well. The major change of eating habits at home has contributed to their success, he says. With more women working outside the home, the convenience of their prepared foods is attractive.

If you've eaten Pennsylvania Dutch cooking, you already know how good it is. If you haven't make sure you search out the Food Marketplace at the Farm Show and try some of the delicious foods being offered by Spring Glen Farm Kitchen.



Baked macaroni and cheese is just one of Spring Glen's products.