

Hand Rolled Pretzels

(Continued from Page B2)

to manufacture pretzels.

Clarence laughs at the idea that those two manufacturers might be competition.

"There's room enough for all of us," Clarence said. "I'm as busy as I want here and I don't want to get bigger."

Ironically, even though the same recipe is used by the three manufacturers, Clarence said, "You can taste the difference."

According to him, flour from other areas produces a different-tasting pretzel and even the water used can make pretzels taste differently.

"Nothing like limestone water," he said.

About five tons of Snavely's unbleached flour are used weekly in the Akron plant.

Three varieties identified as regular hand-twisted, special handmade, and whole wheat are made. At one time, Martin's made cheese pretzels. "But we no longer have time to make them although some of our customers still beg us to make them," Clarence said.

Daily, about 1,400 pounds of the special handmade variety, dipped in lye for color and flavor, are

produced.

The regular hand-twisted, which are light in color, are dipped in baking soda. About 200 pounds of the regular variety are made daily.

The whole wheat are also dipped in baking soda. About 200 pounds of these are made weekly.

For each batch of pretzels, 200 pounds of ingredients are mixed together for 10 minutes in a machine that resembles a cement mixer. The dough is left to rise for 30 minutes before being fed into a hand-cranked apparatus called a dough cutter, which cuts and shoots out uniform pieces of dough that the assembly line workers twist into pretzel shapes.

The twisted pretzels are placed on racks to double in size before being dipped in a solution of boiling water and lye or baking soda for 20 seconds, sprinkled with salt, and flipped into an oven where they are baked at 550 degrees for 10 minutes. The high temperatures crystallize the lye to make it inactive. When the pretzels are finished baking on the outside, a conveyor belt takes them through a dryer for one hour to finish the drying process on the inside of the

pretzel.

The pretzels are packaged in cellophane bags. Clarence's 84-year-old father comes to work every day to pack the bags of pretzels in boxes ready for shipping.

Clarence eats pretzels every day. "I never get tired of them," he said.

He prefers the ones called special handmade, which the company began making in the 1950s. Although some people prefer the whole wheat, Clarence said that they are his least favorite because they are considered "healthier."

Martin's employs 30 people, who work in crews of 13. The average worker twists 10 pretzels a minute although, once in a race, a worker managed to make 20 in a minute.

Of the mostly conservative Mennonite employees, Clarence said, "We never advertise for help because we always have people that want to work here."

Clarence's daughter works in the plant and a son has a pretzel route, which stays within a 50-mile radius. Ten wholesale distributors take care of their own shipping.

"We don't have any trucks; we just sell," Clarence said. "We don't

take new stores because we can't handle anymore. We don't want to work day and night."

The plant is open from 6 a.m. until 5 p.m. During the busy season — June through December — an evening shift works from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on Saturday for three hours.

Martin's averages 40 walk-in customers daily. At the plant, customers may purchase first quality or broken pieces.

Tours are given whenever people request them. "People come from all over the world to watch

us," Clarence said.

He has been asked to go to Singapore to set up a pretzel factory, but he declined.

"Pretzel baking depends a lot on the humidity. It takes less yeast when the weather is hot with high humidity. I'm not sure how pretzel making would work in Singapore," he said. "Besides, I'm busy enough here."

To order Martin's Pretzels by mail, send a check with your order and request a 3-pound package or 6 8-oz bags for \$10. Make sure you request the variety wanted.

Ag Recognition Banquet

YORK (York)—The agribusiness committee of the York County Chamber of Commerce will hold the sixth annual Agriculture Recognition Banquet on January 28, at Wisheaven Hall. The evening will begin with a social hour at 6:00 p.m. featuring exhibits and information booths on display, and dinner will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Guest speaker for the event will be Boyd E. Wolff, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Agriculture. For 33 years after earning a bachelors degree in dairy husbandry, Wolff operated a 410-acre dairy farm. He is the recipient of numerous awards, such as, the Outstanding Country Farm Conservationist award, the Outstanding PA Grassland award and the Distinguished

Service to Agriculture award.

During the evening, the Chamber will acknowledge the participants of the 1992 ag-exchange day and the hosts of the 1992 farm visitation day and farm city tour. Additionally, the Chamber will present the Farm Family Award, the Century Farm Awards and the Outstanding Ag-Industry Award. Tickets are \$13 per person or \$100 for a reserved table of eight. Organization sponsors will be acknowledged in the banquet program, as well as, the Chamber newsletter, News & Views. To register or for additional information, contact Grace Julius at the Chamber of Commerce office, One Market Way East, York or (717)848-4000 or 1-800-673-2429.



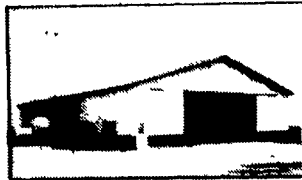
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