



Small Bites

August 13, 2008

Producer Biography: Cloverleaf Creamery.

Bill and Donna Stoltzfus, Buhl Idaho

For the past sixteen years, Bill and Donna Stoltzfus have provided South-Central Idaho with milk from their herd of 90 Registered Holstein dairy cows. Last November, they opened "Smith's," (one of the milk processing plants or creameries, they had previously sold their milk to) under the Cloverleaf Creamery name.

Cloverleaf Creamery is located on Broadway Avenue, in a prime location on the main drag in Buhl, Idaho. Inside they sell many varieties of ice cream that are made on the premises, creating flavors like Vanilla Potato - with real potato flakes inside, and All American Cherry- a personal favorite. Despite the popularity of their unique flavors, Cloverleaf's mainstay is milk.

Bill believes there are four reasons Cloverleaf's milk is higher quality than that of their large industrial competitors. Although each individual trait is desirable, it's the combination of all the following factors that creates a superb product.

Diet! Cloverleaf's cows are always free to roam around, and in the summer they graze on the pasture for their primary food intake. In the winter they are also fed a mixture of hay and silage (chopped corn) to provide all the essential nutrients. Their corn supply comes from three neighbors, none are certified organic, but as far as Cloverleaf knows none are using GM corn. Unlike large-scale dairies, Bill and Donna don't try to increase milk production in their cows by feeding them grain only. Cows aren't built to digest grain alone, and thus get burnt out faster if they're fed grain intensive diets.

Health! A dairy science lesson: All milk gets tested to determine its somatic cell count. This basically measures the number of white blood cells in the milk. If a cow has an infection in her udder, there will be a higher number of white blood cells present. So the somatic cell count determines the health of the cow and her udder, and the overall quality of the milk.

- Shelf life is greatly increased the lower the somatic cell count.
- Milk with a low somatic cell count has better flavor.
- In the U.S.A, Federal standards state that there can't be more than 750,000 somatic cells. In most other countries, that number is 400,000. *Cloverleaf's average somatic cell count is between 100,000 and 150,000!*

Freshness! Since they are a small, local business, milk goes from the cow to the customer in under a week, usually within three days. Idaho's Bounty Co-op's milk gets processed one to two days before delivery.

Glass bottles! They keep the milk colder, and there are no toxins being absorbed as occurs with plastic containers. They're also great because they're reusable and recyclable. Even though the bottles go through a high powered washing machine made for the bottles to meet USDA specifications (a pre-rinse, a soak in 160 degree plus water, then 8 wash/ rinse cycles), please return your bottle clean! Bill and Donna can better spend their time when they're not cleaning out milk bottles.

Enjoy!

Imagine ...

- + Knowing where your food comes from, who is producing it, and their ethics and farming practices
- + Working in support of the health of your local community food shed
where energy stays local and supports our rural economy

