

Chef America East expands facility; plans to add 100-200 jobs next year

By Leigh Stone
Managing Editor
 Montgomery County's largest employer is preparing to add 100-200 more jobs in 1998. Chef America East rolled out its first hot pockets in 1992 with one line and one shift. Now, October's plant expansion coincides with the plant's fourth anniversary. 545 associates (employees) man four production lines and three production lines.

"We went from a 150,000 square foot building in 1996-97," Plant Manager Mike Crawford began gleefully. "We added a shift in 1997 to our line and increased expansion by 100 associates. Next year we add an additional line with a potential of 100 to 200 more associates. We believe we are already the num-

ber one industrial employer in the city and the county and everything I see in the future is indicative of continuing that status."

Crawford agrees that Mt. Sterling was a good site for Chef America East. "This is a great community. This is a great location. We have pride in our community. We give donations to the flood victims this year."

Mt. Sterling Mayor Bert May said Monday. They were one of the first in the industrial park. Lion Apparel was the first, but Chef America was second. They are our largest employer. They

are very civic minded and have been a pleasure to work with. May is a real asset meeting with Chef America executives back in 1992. "We had a 223,000 square foot building where Whirlpool had been. They were in a hurry. This is a great location. We have pride in our community. We give donations to the flood victims this year."

Chef America gives donations to various organizations. "We contribute to Hope Hill, and the Children's Home is our primary contribution. The Council of Arts, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the schools, booster clubs. We give donations to the flood victims this year."

Mt. Sterling Mayor Bert May said Monday. They were one of the first in the industrial park. Lion Apparel was the first, but Chef America was second. They are our largest employer. They



Plant Manager Mike Crawford, Public Relations Coordinator Branda Greene, and Human Resources Director Stephen Day.

A Company History

Chef America, Inc. began in 1977 producing pre-baked Belgian Waffles for sale to restaurants and other food service institutions. Using a unique waffle batter, restaurants could save a delicious, consistent waffle without the mess and guess-work of batter.

In 1980, Hot Pockets brand sandwiches were developed and introduced to the institutional segment of businesses such as convenience stores, vending machines and schools.

In 1983, due to a fire, Chef America, Inc. moved from Van Nuys, Calif., to a facility in Sylmar, Calif. At the same time, a new line was begun with the introduction of Hot Pockets brand sandwiches into grocery stores. Growth went from good to phenomenal.

In 1996, within the final region of the country, was being introduced to retail Hot Pockets brand sandwiches. Chef America, Inc. performed interwoven Belgian Waffles.

They were introduced in grocery stores as Belgian Chef Waffles. The number of associates had more than doubled. A search began in 1997 and culminated in the purchase of five (5) acre industrial complex in Chatsworth, Calif., that same year. The existing building was redesigned to accommodate Chef America, Inc.

The move to Chatsworth in March 1998 coincided with the nationwide introduction of Lean Pockets brand sandwiches and signaled our growth from a small business to a medium-sized organization.

In 1992, Chef America, Inc. finalized the plan to build a new manufacturing facility. After much research, the Mt. Sterling, Ky., site was selected, design and construction of the 150,000 square foot facility began. On Sept. 21, 1993, Chef America, Inc. opened the second manufacturing facility. Chef America East, Inc. (the Company). More than 100 new associates one line, one shift began orientation that day. In early 1994, a decision was made to move Chef America, Inc.'s corporate headquarters to Denver, Colorado. The site of Inverness Business Park was chosen and a two-story building was purchased and renovated for the corporate office. Seventy associates began working in the office on Aug. 16, 1994.

Employees praise supervision, benefits

"I like it here. You see it, they give it. You see the supervisors roll up their sleeves and don't mind the gear we wear. We're working around a hot stove. I want to be clean."

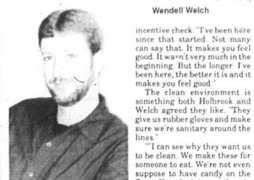
The company's across the board incentive check program is provided as a separate check, once a month, beyond the associate's regular check.

Back in '92, checks were issued in the \$10 range.

Nowadays, checks are in the \$70 range.

Plant manager Mike Crawford is proud to discuss the company's incentive program. "It's directly related to the performance of the plant. It is all directly related to our associates' input. It is there to improve morale and to good personal more involvement. We gain encouragement and team work."

Crawford also explained the duty as plant manager. "My primary function is to motivate staff and the management team to be more effective leaders to the associates. They are collectively responsible for the plant. One sentence I can't emphasize enough - It is our associates who drive our plant."



Wendy Welch

incentive check. "I've been here since that started. Not many can say that. It makes you feel good. It was very much in the beginning. But the longer I've been here, the better it is and it makes you feel good."

The clean environment in something both Holbrook and Welch agreed they like. "They give us rubber gloves and make sure we're sanitary around the lines."

"I can see why they want us to be clean. We make these for someone to eat. We're not even suppose to have candy on the floor. You don't want that in someone's hot pocket."

About everyone at Chef can name their favorite Hot Pocket. "Mine's beef barbecue," said Holbrook.

They make that at the California plant.

Human Resource Director Stephen Day likes the Popovers Hot Pocket and says what he made daily is driven by what sells. "We do trial runs every now and then to see what we can produce. Most Research and Development is done at our corporate offices in Denver."

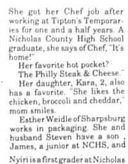
Rita Townsend of 2299 Cane Run Road works in processing.



Stephen Day

Wendell Welch works in receiving. With Chef two and a half years, he works eight or nine semi trucks in an eight-hour shift. Before Chef, he did carpentry work and had been employed at Kitchen Aid for 20 years. A Whetstone Road restaurant, Welch doesn't mind the half-hour drive to Mt. Sterling. "We do have a monthly

Incentive program inspires work ethic



Esther Wedie

She got her Chef job after working at Tupon's Temporary for one and a half years. A Nicholas County High School graduate, she says of Chef, "It's home."

"My favorite hot pocket? The Philly Steak & Cheese. Her daughter, Kara, 2, also has a favorite. "She likes the chicken, broccoli and cheddar, mom smilies."

Each Wedie of Sharpburg works in packaging. She and husband Steven have a son, James, a junior at NCBS, and Nyriya first grader at Nicholas County Elementary School. "The pay good and the benefits are good," Wedie says first about Chef America. Although some say the cooler temperature, necessary since working with food, takes getting used to, Wedie claims, "I've not been cold since I've been here."



Chef America

Fay Caswell's been at Chef two months in packaging. She and husband Henry reside in Murrfield. "It's so different here. I think the benefits and pay are tops. They give you hands-on training and safety training. The food doesn't taste like 'You dress for it'."

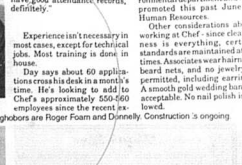
"It's a good job, a good place to work," concluded Holbrook.

People who want to work get hired

Who gets hired? "We're taking applications every Thursday from 2 to 4. We do maintain a data base of applicable candidates," said Stephen Day, Human Resources Administrator.

"Our criteria? What we look for is someone who wants to work. Someone who's dependable and will concentrate on deadlines. We want people who have good attendance, records, definitely."

Other considerations about working at Chef - since cleanliness is everything, certain standards are maintained at all times. Associates wear clean, neat, and no jewelry is permitted, including earrings. A smooth, well-groomed hair is acceptable. No nail polish is allowed. The recent hire of Rogers Foam and Donnelly



Fay Caswell

Experience isn't necessary in most cases, except for technical jobs. Most training is done in-house. Day says about 60 applicants cross his desk in a month's time. He's looking to add to Chef's approximately 550-600 employees since the recent hire of Rogers Foam and Donnelly Construction is ongoing.

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SATURDAY OCTOBER 18

7 AM	8 AM	9 AM	10 AM	11 AM	12 PM	1 PM	2 PM	3 PM	4 PM	5 PM	6 PM	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM	10 PM	11 PM	12 AM
WSAZ	WTOG	WPCV	WYAN	WTKR	WLEE	WVBT	WTVZ	KEET	TBS	ESPN	WGN	USA					

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 15

7 AM	8 AM	9 AM	10 AM	11 AM	12 PM	1 PM	2 PM	3 PM	4 PM	5 PM	6 PM	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM	10 PM	11 PM	12 AM
WSAZ	WTOG	WPCV	WYAN	WTKR	WLEE	WVBT	WTVZ	KEET	TBS	ESPN	WGN	USA					

SUNDAY OCTOBER 19

7 AM	8 AM	9 AM	10 AM	11 AM	12 PM	1 PM	2 PM	3 PM	4 PM	5 PM	6 PM	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM	10 PM	11 PM	12 AM
WSAZ	WTOG	WPCV	WYAN	WTKR	WLEE	WVBT	WTVZ	KEET	TBS	ESPN	WGN	USA					

THURSDAY OCTOBER 16

7 AM	8 AM	9 AM	10 AM	11 AM	12 PM	1 PM	2 PM	3 PM	4 PM	5 PM	6 PM	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM	10 PM	11 PM	12 AM
WSAZ	WTOG	WPCV	WYAN	WTKR	WLEE	WVBT	WTVZ	KEET	TBS	ESPN	WGN	USA					

MONDAY OCTOBER 20

7 AM	8 AM	9 AM	10 AM	11 AM	12 PM	1 PM	2 PM	3 PM	4 PM	5 PM	6 PM	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM	10 PM	11 PM	12 AM
WSAZ	WTOG	WPCV	WYAN	WTKR	WLEE	WVBT	WTVZ	KEET	TBS	ESPN	WGN	USA					

FRIDAY OCTOBER 17

7 AM	8 AM	9 AM	10 AM	11 AM	12 PM	1 PM	2 PM	3 PM	4 PM	5 PM	6 PM	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM	10 PM	11 PM	12 AM
WSAZ	WTOG	WPCV	WYAN	WTKR	WLEE	WVBT	WTVZ	KEET	TBS	ESPN	WGN	USA					

TUESDAY OCTOBER 21

7 AM	8 AM	9 AM	10 AM	11 AM	12 PM	1 PM	2 PM	3 PM	4 PM	5 PM	6 PM	7 PM	8 PM	9 PM	10 PM	11 PM	12 AM
WSAZ	WTOG	WPCV	WYAN	WTKR	WLEE	WVBT	WTVZ	KEET	TBS	ESPN	WGN	USA					