

World's Finest Chocolate

The Intelligencer

CAMPBELLFORD — Chocoholics, be warned. Even driving by the World's Finest Chocolate factory in this village north of Brighton can be addictive.

And those who open the door and walk into the plant are lost forever.

The scent of chocolate in the making is intoxicating, to say the least.

But employees at World's Finest seem immune to the rich odors wafting through the 85,000-square-foot factory.

"After you've been here awhile, you really don't notice it," said production manager Robert Taylor.

"That doesn't mean you don't enjoy the chocolate, however."

In fact, taste tests are part of the job description for the plant's 200 employees — a task they don't seem to mind.

"We value the input of our employees when manufacturing our products," said Karl Howse, vice-president and general

manager of World's Finest. "Whether it's testing products as part of quality control, or giving their opinions on a new product, it's all part of the process."

For Howse, the plant's success story is something he's overseen personally for the last 26 years.

The former geneticist's career took an about-face when he decided to pursue a sweeter path.

He's proud of World's Finest's leading role in producing chocolates strictly as fund-raising ventures.

"What we do here is unique, in that we're the only company that makes chocolate just to be sold in fund-raising," said Howse. Other companies make products for both the retail and fund-raising markets, but World's Finest specializes in fund-raising.

Schools are World's Finest's best customers, said Milt Newman, vice-president of marketing and sales.

"Approximately 90 per cent of our sales are for schools and educational groups. And that means that the fall is our peak production period."

"Approximately 90 per cent of our sales are for schools and educational groups. And that means that the fall is our peak production period."

Whether a school or a minor hockey team wants to sell chocolate to raise money, World's Finest — which opened

for business in 1957 — deals with small and large customers in the same way.

A consultant visits the group and determines their needs, then takes them step-by-step through a process that helps them raise the necessary funds.

Newman said World's Finest recommends that groups not sell their products for more than two weeks.

"Any longer than that, and you may saturate the market and end up with unsold product."

Newman said a popular product requested by schools are World's Finest chocolate-covered almonds, which usually sell for \$2 a box.

"That's a price that people probably wouldn't pay for chocolate in a store, but because we make a quality product, people know they're getting their money's worth."

Production manager Robert Taylor explained how the chocolate is made.

The process begins with the roasting of cocoa beans from plantations in St. Lucia and the Ivory Coast, to bring out the beans' flavor.

The shells, which split and fall off during roasting, and packaged and sold as garden mulch to nurseries, said Taylor.

From there, the beans are milled into chocolate liquor, which is chocolate in its raw form.

It is then put through a press to remove the cocoa butter. What's left is called cocoa cake, which is turned into cocoa powder and sold to food companies.

"There is very little waste produced during the production of our chocolate. We try to find a use for just about everything," said Taylor.

The cocoa butter is then mixed with the chocolate

liquor and a milk powder added to make a paste. It is refined to a powder, and then put into a conch, or 5,000 pound vat, where liquid is added to make chocolate.

From there, the mixture is molded and made into everything from chocolate almonds and chocolate-topped biscuits to caramels and the latest product, Cappuccino Creme: a chocolate with a hint of coffee.

Exactly how much chocolate the plant produces is a company secret, as is the number of customers nationwide.

Two plant expansions in the last seven years, and a third one in the works are a testimonial to the company's continued success, Newman said.

With customers coast to coast — many of them faithful for 25 to 30 years — World's Finest is not content to rest on its laurels," said Howse.

"We're always looking for ways to improve ourselves and come up with new products. This is a very competitive industry, and we have to find ways to stay in the game."

*Intelligencer
December 10, 1995*