



Perry's Oats Cream™ shows how non-dairy is done

The family-owned Perry's Ice Cream Company was established as a devoted dairy operation, one that's delighted dessert denizens for decades, and one that continues to dazzle throughout its Great Lakes and Upstate New York markets.

But after celebrating 100 years of scoops, smiles and satisfied customers last year, the company found itself facing a restless question: What's next?

"After last year's anniversary, we had to ask ourselves, what can we do in the next 100 years?" said Nichole Buryta, brand manager with Perry's.

The answer: Diversify its popular ice cream roster with its new non-dairy Oats Cream™ line, released in early April. Developed with the favorably smooth consistency of filtered oats milk from Elma, New York's Elmhurst 1925, Perry's has delved into the growing plant-based dessert market, but with the same signature creativity and innovation of their most cherished products. Citing consumer lifestyle and dietary trends; a growth in veganism, lactose-intolerant population; and the proliferation of a "flexitarian" customer that prefers to spontaneously meander between dietary classifications, the company saw an opportunity to develop a dairy-free product.

This may seem counterintuitive for a fourth-generation family business built off fresh milk. But what Perry's research team found is that these same consumers straying from dairy products still desired the craft expertise of dairy professionals to create an alternative line of ice cream.

"What we're finding is that consumers are looking for dairy-free products from dairy manufacturers," said Buryta. "We know how to make good ice cream, so who better to make a non-dairy alternative for them, since we're already known and trusted in that category?"

So how did they do it with their first round of Oats Cream? According to Perry's Senior Food Technologist Amanda Gleba, it started with an initial understanding of what gives a product a texture and scoopability that's similar to ice cream.

"We take our recipes down from each ingredient to determine what works best," said Gleba, who cites the creamy composition of oats milk as critical to Perry's new creations. "That way,

we can develop a product that's as indulgent and has the richness and mouthfeel of ice cream, but is non-dairy."

Thankfully, one of the first fans of Gleba's initial batch was Gayle Perry Denning, the company's vice president of strategic branding and sustainability. Her amazement with the concoction's consistency and taste left her with two questions: how fast can Oats Cream be put into production, and how many flavors can be developed?

Today, it's gone from pleasing at trade shows to shelf space in supermarket freezers, and features an initial run of seven different and devourable flavors: Apple Strudel, Blueberry Pancake, Coconut Caramel, Oat Latte, Peanut Butter Coffee Cake, Peanut Butter & Cookies, and Snickerdoodle. All selections were developed to cater to non-egg ingredients, complement the dynamics of Oats Cream, and also bring some ambitious ideas to the dessert discussion. New flavors will soon follow in the future, but now that Perry's has aced its entry into the non-dairy market, they're left with a new, unexpected question.

What if Perry's loyal customers start straying from its traditional dairy treats and, instead, start scooping its non-dairy selections?

"Our goal is to fulfil a need for consumers who are not able to enjoy our traditional products and create a want for those who seek flexibility of both dairy and non-dairy selections. "If we are delighting them with our brand," said a laughing Buryta, "then we're happy."