

The Swiss Family Cheesemakers of Logan



In the village of Waldkirch, Switzerland there's a Gossner family farmhouse with an engraving on the backside that sums up Gossner Foods better than anything else, says Dolores Gossner Wheeler, current razor-sharp CEO of the multi-generation family business headquartered in Cache County.

"You good faithful farmers, how are you valued by your country? If God does not bless and the farmer does not work, I ask, who has something to eat?"

While one eighth-generation descendent of the family still owns that property in Switzerland, another is making good on a legacy of amazing Swiss cheese-making that today is arguably the best in the United States. Their varieties are so good, many of the nation's top brands will only buy and distribute Gossner Swiss products.

"They come to us," says Dolores, "They say 'you make the best Swiss and we want to sell only the best.'" And thus numerous successful partnerships with distributors across the country have been selling Gossner cheese many a long time.

But that's not the only thing the company excels at. A visit to their Logan store is an experience in the wonders and innovations of modern dairy products. Along with their famous Swiss, you will find curds, whipping cream, butter, spreads, and milks in many creative flavors — root beer float is a favorite. And, you can't leave without one of their delightfully-flavored ice cream cones in hand.

Gathering milk from about 300 Utah and Idaho family dairies, give or take, Gossner still does business on a handshake and even pays more for milk than most buyers.

"We've sold our products on quality and service. Our customers depend on that level and because of it they stay loyal," says Dolores.

But it's the hard work of making Swiss cheese that they are most proud of and noted for. And it's a story that begins in, where else? Switzerland.

You see Dolores' father Edwin Gossner, Sr., born in 1909 in the eastern region of Egliswil-Waldkirch, Switzerland moved to Wisconsin in 1930 to work as an apprentice to his brother's startup cheese factory. His brother, Ernest, was a craftsman, trained at the Swiss Cheesemaking School of Switzerland, and passed that knowledge to Edwin.

But in 1937 their factory burned down so Edwin packed up his newly-acquired skills and headed West. He worked briefly for a cheese maker in California, but by 1941 was ready to launch into his own endeavor.

Edwin specifically chose Logan, Utah's Cache Valley, as it closely resembled the climate and elevation of his Switzerland homeland, and because of the abundance of local dairies.

Though simplistic and practical, his instincts paid off immediately. Within five years he had built the largest Swiss cheese factory in the world, producing 120, 200-pound wheels of cheese each day.

Ironically, as big and important to the cheese industry as Gossner is today, most people don't know much about them - even in Utah.

"Our Swiss is in every state in the Union but you won't find it under the Gossner name," says Dolores. In fact, their product is sold under more than 400 different brands. In spite of that, she would like the world to know more about the Gossner label. But she knows it will take some time and effort, similar to what they put into making Swiss cheese, which is notoriously much harder to make than cheddar.

"There's a lot that can go wrong with Swiss cheese," says Dolores with a serious tone. "I call it 'the naughty puppy' because it requires a lengthier process - we have to hold it for at least 60 days whereas cheddar gets moved within a few days.

"You can't do a mediocre job on Swiss cheese. But, I figure we do the hardest things in the dairy industry because we have the best people to do it," she adds proudly.

Cheese experts and loyal customers know that the Gossner work ethic etched on that farmhouse in Switzerland is more than a clever saying. But Cache County residents also see it etched on the family's hearts and have benefitted from Gossner generosity, too.

Sadly, cancer has been particularly hard on the family, taking the lives of several prominent members over the years, including Dolores husband. So, along with the endless contributions they make to homeless shelters, food banks, and for disaster relief, this family recently handed a \$2 million check to Logan Regional Hospital — the organization's largest donation ever — to build a 9,000-square-foot extension to its cancer center.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to share our family's legacy in such a meaningful way within a community that has been so good to us," stated Dolores in a press release announcing the contribution.

Clearly, Dolores and Gossner Foods have a special connection to their Logan community, and Utah in general. The nexus of excellent family milk producers and quality manufactured products play a role in that, but Dolores also has another take on it.

“Utah has a reputation for being conservative and boring. But I like boring. Boring tastes good,” she laughs.

Perhaps another great saying to etch on the back of their house.