



Innovation and Expansion

A CONVERSATION WITH TOM BENNER, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF LESAFFRE YEAST CORPORATION AND RED STAR YEAST



Q: *Custom solutions are a new buzzword for bakery ingredient and manufacturing. How does Lesaffre plan to address the growing demand for custom baking solutions with its new blending plant, set to open at your industrial campus in Cedar Rapids, Iowa?*

TB: Our customers are looking to reach customers with more unique and artisan approaches to their products. To be a valued partner in this endeavor, we need to be resourceful, fast and agile. We have put years into developing a deep library of enzymes, which can be specialized to the need of the customer and used for many complex blends. Our investment locally will ensure we react and move at the speed our customers want to go and allow for rapid turnaround of samples for testing and finished products.

This newest facility will bring the best technology from our other blending sites around the world. We will be fully automated and flexible enough to handle a wide range of products and ingredients. But on top of all the hardware we have installed, our highly capable top-quality people are what we consider to be our first and most important advantage. If you speak with any of our customers, the conversation quickly migrates to how good our people are, and we are very proud of that here.

Q: *Clean label has evolved into a broad term that encompasses the rising consumer demand for bakery products with fewer, but more recognizable ingredients. How is Lesaffre addressing this issue on a comprehensive scale?*

TB: We are responding to this trend with new products and our new facility in Cedar Rapids to produce clean label products. With this new

facility we will offer a complete line of baking ingredients that satisfies our customers' requirements for producing clean label breads and other baked goods.

Q: *Lesaffre is a true pioneer and the first to offer organic yeast in fresh and dry forms produced in the United States. How do you see the potential for growth of organic bakery products in North America, and how does Lesaffre play an instrumental role in the organic market?*

TB: Consumers are looking for more organic options, and we currently offer yeast solutions in all forms of organic baking. Our product has superior performance, which is on par with our best commercial grades. In addition, we are developing organic solutions in our baking ingredients to satisfy our customers' desire to capitalize on this significant growth trend.

Q: *Considering the rich history of innovation at Lesaffre, what factors have been instrumental in the company growing into its current position as a world leader in yeast research, technology and manufacturing?*

TB: Two factors are instrumental. One is operating in close proximity to our customers. By being close to our customers, we are able to make our investments count — whether in research, capabilities, or capacities like our new blending facility in Cedar Rapids. We knew it was critical for our capacity to be here in North America, where we can provide flexibility and responsiveness.

Second, we are committed to research and development and advancing our technology. Our commitment to research and development is demonstrated by the longevity of our

research teams, our many years of experience, and our broad depth of knowledge. Being a family-held company for more than 160 years gives us patience and a long-term view. We have a commitment toward continuous improvement.

Q: *How important is the fact that Lesaffre has 38 Baking Centers® around the world to address the needs of commercial bakers?*

TB: It is extremely important. We often hear from our customers how valuable it is to them that we have Baking Centers® in all parts of the world. This allows us to bring together a wealth of experience in different types of products. It also allows us to support global customers with their local needs, wherever in the world they may be located. Sharing knowledge and new product development are very important. Having 38 Baking Centers® in all parts of the world allows Lesaffre to get closer to the markets and anticipate the needs of bakers.

Q: *How does Lesaffre respond to the challenges of North American customers by tapping into its global network of expertise?*

TB: Our global network allows us to be an innovation resource to our customers. It also makes us more resourceful at solving their problems. Local traditions in bread making are very rich and diverse as you circle the globe. We collaborate with our key customers on new product ideas. We offer solutions for innovation in new tastes and flavors from around the world. We can pull ideas from a very broad experience base, and our customers love the results.

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