

# Cutting Edge Lab Equipment Helps Blue Bell Maintain Quality

**B**lue Bell Creamery, Brenham, Texas, has been producing homemade, old-fashioned ice cream and frozen novelties for almost 100 years. The company's "local tradition and flavor" guarantee stems from its high standards of quality, and to ensure the taste of their legendary ice cream, Blue Bell looks to a host of innovative laboratory technology solutions that maintain the high product quality and supply standards that they are known for in the dairy industry.

In 1980, Blue Bell purchased its first Advanced Instruments cryoscope to test and measure the milk used for ice cream mixes. The cryoscope determines the amount of added water in milk by using the freezing-point method, which enables Blue Bell to insure the milk supply has not been adulterated.

When the company grew and needed a second facility, Blue Bell Creamery Director of Quality Control and Mix Processing Operations, Tommy Supak, knew exactly what to do for new lab equipment.

"It came time to equip a new lab facility with a cryoscope, so we looked at our service and equipment history with Advanced Instruments and decided there was no reason to shop around," said Supak.

In 2004, when Supak needed to upgrade, he purchased another Advanced Instruments cryoscope to handle Blue Bell's increased ice cream production at the Brenham facility. The newer model offered enhanced features, including a more robust cooling system.

"I've used Advanced's cryoscopes and found them to be very dependable, user friendly machines," said Carol Haarmeyer, Blue Bell lab technician. "With regular calibration and care the machine has little downtime, if any."

Each machine has a detailed user's manual that guides technicians on the equipment use, diagnostic reading, calibration, and cleaning. Advanced Instruments also provides a support phone line that customers—including Blue Bell employees—can call for immediate assistance with issues ranging from use, calibration, errors, and cleaning, she said.

"Advanced Instruments not only sold us their equipment, but they came to Texas and taught us how to use it so that we get repeatable results," said Supak. "The fact that they come down to educate our team of technicians on machine use and maintenance—on several occasions—is really what sells the program," he added.

To uphold their high standards, Supak relies on the Delta Lactoscope™ Analyzer from Advanced Instruments to check and monitor butterfat levels and solids at the Brenham facility.

"The Lactoscope runs consistently with up to 50 ice cream samples a day," said Andy Kollman, Blue Bell lab mgr. "We have to maintain a 10% butterfat for our ice cream to be legal. It is important to run a good test on the incoming ingredients so the ice cream mix meets the legal standards and does not affect our product quality."



■ Having reliable, accurate lab equipment contributes to Blue Bell Ice Cream's ability to produce consistently high quality product.



Since working with dairy products requires such specific and precise equipment, Supak is happy to have a quality, cost-effective equipment provider.

"This equipment plays a very significant role in our manufacturing process," said Supak, "for example, when testing cream, it is not uncommon to have a load valued at \$40,000 to \$50,000 dollars run through here. If we are off even one half percent then you can be talking some big dollars in lost product."

At Blue Bell Creamery, Advanced Instruments' technology is playing a crucial role in maintaining the quality reputation the Blue Bell ice cream brand is known for. "We are able to produce our trademark ice cream confidently, with the use of their instruments," said Supak, "and rest assured that we are taking every possible step with our product to maintain our longstanding tradition of quality." ■

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