Tillamook County Creamery Association Relies on Hygiena™ Tests to Ensure Dairy Products Meet Quality Standards

Introduction

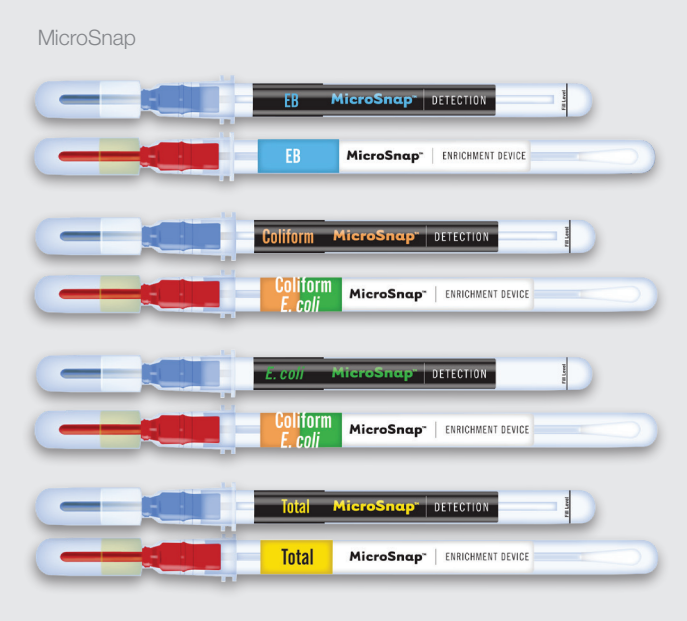
For over 110 years, Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA) has been manufacturing high-quality milk and milk products. As a cooperative, TCCA has around 80 farmer-owners, who care for the land and raise healthier cows, which provides better quality milk to ensure better dairy products. TCCA is committed to growth while making sure quality is not sacrificed. This means using the latest tools and technologies to ensure their dairy products remain safe for consumption.

The flagship plant in Tillamook, Ore. makes cheese, including TCCA's vintage white Maker's Reserve cheddars, as well as ice cream and whey powder. In 2001, they opened a second cheesemaking plant in Boardman, Oregon, to handle the demand for more products. The Boardman location doubled TCCA's cheese manufacturing capabilities upon opening, and after another expansion in 2006, increased output by another 50 percent. TCCA works with co-manufacturers to make ice cream, yogurt, sour cream, butter and cream cheese spread.

The foundation of their high quality cheese production lies in maintaining their cheese starter cultures. In the past, cultures were transported from the starter room to the lab for plating to ensure the cultures used in production were free of contaminating microorganisms. There was always the risk of introducing contamination during the sample collection and transport processes. To minimize risk of false positive events, the team of cheese operators and laboratory staff identified an alternative method: a self-contained testing system, MicroSnap™ Coliform, that could be performed in the starter culture room (with no transport needed). Since starter cultures were tested daily, MicroSnap offered a simplified way to get results the same day without transporting and plating samples. As they tested multiple starter cultures per day, this new approach significantly reduced workload and eliminated daily plating, saving valuable technician time and reducing time to results.

"The technique is easy; the operator can easily run it.", says Amy Spence, Corporate Lab Manager at TCCA. "Having an 8-hour test is much more efficient for this type of business, as we need daily results for cheese production."

TCCA has successfully used MicroSnap for almost five years and hasn't looked back. As Amy reflects, "Hygiena is easy to work with. Daniel helped us get the product into the facility and assisted with process and validation. We haven't had any issues with our testing methods since implementation."



BAX Systems

Results

As a result, TCCA has worked with Hygiena to simplify other testing processes in their facilities. Recently, they have moved away from using traditional MPN (most probable number) methodologies for testing their whey protein concentrates (WPC) for contamination with *Staphylococcus aureus*. They chose to test by PCR using the BAX® System. The savings have been significant – especially in sustainability, where the reduction in glass usage saves on disposal costs (MPN required a minimum of 9 glass tubes per sample tested, along with other reagents and technician time). In addition, switching MPN testing to PCR using the BAX System has simplified workflow within the laboratory while maintaining high-quality results. "The time, energy, and effort savings have been compelling, especially with the confidence in the BAX System results," says Amy. The next step will be to validate matrices to perform similar testing methods for the detection of *E. coli*.

Learn more about Tillamook at: https://www.tillamook.com/
For information on MicroSnap or BAX, visit www.Hygiena.com