



Smile and say, "cheese"

➤ **Here's something to smile about. It's a picture of a growing company.** Across-the-board sales growth and still greater opportunities have Meister Cheese Company LLC, a 96-year-old family business, expanding in its hometown of Muscoda, Wis. Meister Cheese expects by late 2014 to complete nearly 90,000 square feet of construction work including numerous expansions to its Muscoda plant and a new industrial ingredient facility.

For the record, Meister Cheese processes and packages as many as 50 different items for retail, private label, club store and supermarket deli channels. Its product line ranges from popular Cheddar, Monterey Jack and Colby varieties to custom specialties such as Wild Morel & Leek, Roasted Red Pepper, Horseradish, Habanero and Jalapeno. It can cut and package 40-lb. blocks, 10-lb. loaves, deli horns, longhorns and other sizes and can guarantee items are certified as Kosher, Organic and/or rBST-free.

Muscoda Protein Products, a Meister subsidiary, also processes and supplies industrial lactose for everything from bakery goods to infant formulas and pharmaceuticals. ➤



➤ **Specializing in food plant and distribution center design and construction.**
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Meister Cheese & ESI: Partners in Food Safety

ESI engineers will literally design food safety into critical areas at Meister Cheese. Plans call for...

... **TWO NEW EMPLOYEE FACILITIES** for the protein and cheese plants. The employee facilities will have full-height HDPE lockers, restroom and break room facilities as well as direct access to the plant corridor areas, which have been planned to provide the separation from "red line" processing access areas. Process areas will have hygienic hand wash and foot foamer stations.

... **PROCESSING AREAS** with positive pressure hygienic air handling equipment that will provide highly efficient micron-filtrated ventilation, temperature and humidity control.

... **A WALKABLE IMP** [insulated metal panel] ceiling over the cheese plant production area. This will separate utility and process piping and allow for plant maintenance during production runs. Other features will include IMP walls on sanitary concrete curbs and cementitious urethane flooring, which has exceptional elastomeric properties and chemical resistance. Production area doors



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MEISTER CHEESE COMPANY

will be USDA and FRP rapid roll doors with stainless steel hardware and removal shrouds to provide ease of cleaning concealed areas.

... **NEW PROCESSING EQUIPMENT** with sealed integrally piped Clean in Place (CIP) system and remote hose stations for curd table, floor, wall and general cleanup activities during CIP shift work.

When it came to assigning such an important growth project, Meister evaluated its options and then selected ESI Group USA, a single-source, full-service engineering and construction services leader. Moreover, ESI specializes in temperature controlled food processing and food distribution centers and has proven expertise with critical topics such as food safety and sustainability.

In this instance, ESI Design and ESI Constructors, who make up ESI Group USA, will work hand-in-hand to provide full-service design development, project budgeting, scheduling, construction documents, project subcontractor bidding and general construction. Design development began in August 2012 with development and coordination of processing equipment layouts from numerous vendors as well as ongoing design-development of the facility expansion and utility infrastructure engineering.

So what's the big picture? Meister officials say they're excited about this project for several reasons. For starters, they expect more space (expanded plant and packaging areas) and new equipment will

boost Meister's cheese and whey products output by as much as 100% over present volume (*and they already have been growing by 20% each year during the last five years*).

Still more new expansions will be dedicated to whey protein concentrate (WPC) production, which represents a new food ingredient line. WPC powder has many uses in dairy products, and nutrient-supplemented foods such as sports, workout, and diet drinks, as well as high protein bars and snack foods.

More specifically, officials say Muscoda Protein Products' additions feature USDA food grade state-of-the-art processing equipment. Meanwhile, a new cheese production addition will have expanded capacity and fully automated cheese block formers. ESI will also design for full conveyance to the packaging and pre-cooling and holding cooler areas. The packaging area will be isolated from the sanitary production areas via conveyance openings.

Additional projects involve new docks, storage coolers and food ingredient warehouse space. Last but not least, Meister will renovate its offices to create a product

tasting and presentation area for clients and more room for staff.

"Working with ESI has been an efficient and pleasant experience," says Scott Meister, president of Meister Cheese "Incorporating new expansions into existing facilities always presents unique challenges. ESI Group has demonstrated an ability to combine their experiences with our requirements to develop a building plan that we are truly excited about. We will be able to continue our growth pattern for years to come." ■

AT A GLANCE

- ▶ Meister processes and packages as many as **50** cheeses for retail, private label, club store and deli channels.
- ▶ Meister Cheese sales have been growing **20%** per year for each of the past five years.
- ▶ Plant expansions, new dry warehouse will account for nearly **90,000** square feet of projects at Meister Cheese.



Twenty years of experience with new construction, expansions and renovation of food facilities.

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