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Ellison bakes up own brand
Expansion, new jobs in plant's future

A Fort Wayne bakery is launching a line of premium soft cookies similar to ones it previously made for Archway.

Ellison Bakery Inc. plans to invest \$1.25 million to add a third oven and production line in its plant at 4108 Ferguson Road after the cookies find a loyal customer base, said Todd Wallin, vice president and general manager.

That would add about 15 jobs to the workforce, possibly within a year. The company now employs 75.

Ellison Bakery made Archway cookies from 1950 to October, when Archway filed for bankruptcy. Over the years, Ellison Bakery has broadened its customer base to include schools, hospitals, nursing homes and ice cream manufacturers.

By the time Archway went out of business, less than 10 percent of Ellison Bakery's cookie output was for the Ohio-based company. As a result, the company didn't have to cut jobs, Wallin said.

The company plans to ship 12 new cookie varieties to stores in June or July. The date depends on how long it takes to finalize an agreement with a distributor.

Wallin acknowledged that the names will sound familiar to Archway customers. But, he said, superior ingredients and preparation techniques will make Ellison Bakery-brand cookies more upscale.

"The flavor will be similar. We think these are better," he said. "Lots of things you do on the ingredient side will make a difference in the cookie."

In early 2008, Ellison Bakery completed a \$4 million expansion that laid the groundwork for adding a third production line, which would include an oven, conveyor and mixer. The company's two production lines now operate around the clock.

The privately owned company's sales were up 38 percent in 2008 and have increased an additional 25 percent this year, Wallin said. Demand has not waned with the recession.

"It's a fairly inexpensive treat," he said. Even when consumers are bypassing big-ticket items, he said, "we can still take a pack of cookies home to the kids."

‘C’ is for cookie

Ellison Bakery will sell the following types of cookies under its own brand:

- Iced lemon
- Oatmeal
- Oatmeal raisin
- Sugar
- Molasses
- Rocky road
- Chocolate chip
- Windmill
- Date-filled
- Raspberry-filled
- Apple raisin
- Coconut macaroon

Photos by Dean Musser Jr. | The Journal Gazette

Workers at Ellison Bakery prepare cookies to be boxed as they come down the production line Thursday.



Jeff Crider removes dough from a mixer.



Todd Wallin

