

● MINI-MELTS

WWW.MINIMELTS.COM

HQ: NORWICH, CONN.

EMPLOYEES: 1,000+

SPECIALTY: ICE CREAM

TOM MOSEY, PRESIDENT: "WE WERE THE SMALL GUY GETTING POUNDED BY THE GIANT, BUT WE MANAGED TO SUCCEED AND WERE ABLE TO WEATHER THAT STORM."



Although successful in the United States, Mini-Melts are also tapping into the international market in a big way.

Deep Freeze

Mini-Melts ice cream – which is found in 30 countries – is cryogenically frozen to lock in its flavor and give the product a fun texture, its creator says. **BY KATHRYN JONES**

WHEN MINI-MELTS PRESIDENT TOM MOSEY FOUNDED THE COMPANY in 1996, his mission was to market a product that people all over the world love, young or old: ice cream. However, Mini-Melts is not your ordinary ice cream.

"The concept of cryogenically frozen ice cream is an excellent way to lock in the flavor of the ice cream in a truly unique way," the company explains. "First, it is well-known that the faster a product can be frozen, the better it will taste." Mini-Melts undergoes a special process where a super-premium ice cream base is flash-frozen at -304 F with liquid nitrogen to immediately lock in the flavor. This is the coldest temperature that is achievable on Earth.

"The exciting shapes produced by this process are mouth-wateringly irresistible," the company adds. Most ice creams have air whipped into them to enable them to be scooped. Mini-Melts, on the other hand, have no air whipped into them. This gives them an unusual shape that closely resembles popcorn, while still remaining cold and moist like regular ice cream.

Mini-Melts can be found in vending machines at malls or concession stands at amusement parks in 30 countries. "We developed our international market first, which is unusual for most U.S. companies, but it was something I was keenly interested in anyway," Mosey says. "In my opinion, most small- to medium-sized companies miss a lot of opportunities internationally because the U.S. market is so big, but it is competitive. There's a huge international market for the medium-sized companies to go into."

'BLESSING IN DISGUISE'

Mosey immigrated to the United States from the United Kingdom in the mid-1980s. After obtaining his MBA in international business at the University of Dallas in Texas, he established a publishing company and also worked in real estate. When a friend of his introduced him to Dippin' Dots ice cream, Mosey wanted to market a similar product on a global scale.

Almost immediately after the Norwich, Conn.-based compa-

ny went into business, it was sued by Dippin' Dots for patent infringement. While awaiting trial, Mosey discontinued marketing in the United States and started developing its international market. The company opened its first Asian factory in South Korea in 1997, shortly before opening a second factory in the Philippines.

Now, it has factories all over the world, including the United Arab Emirate of Sharjah and China. Mosey himself travels from plant to plant and often finds himself in Uzbekistan one day and Bangkok the next. He estimates he has been to nearly 90 countries in less than 10 years. "The lawsuit was a blessing in disguise, but it was a long, arduous ordeal," Mosey notes. Dippin' Dots' patent was declared invalid, he says, adding that the "alleged inventor" had committed fraud on the patent offers, the court found. "That was an interesting chapter in the whole business development side of our company," he adds. "We were the small guy getting pounded by the giant, but we managed to succeed and were able to weather that storm."

"Most people who get sued for patent infringement are presumed to be guilty until proven innocent," he continues. "I am not saying the legal system presumes you are guilty, but the marketplace does due the overall lack of knowledge of the way the legal system and patents, in particular, work."

"That's why we couldn't conduct business in the United States. Instead of trying to fight that, we just waited for the trial, which eventually came, and we won. We are appealing to the Supreme Court of the United States to keep the fraud verdict the jury awarded."

WHAT'S YOUR FLAVOR?

A major benefit of developing operations across the world is that it allows Mini-Melts to introduce new flavors it wouldn't have discovered otherwise. "A major benefit of manufacturing in the local market is that we can easily develop flavors that fit into that market," the company says. "How about Green Tea flavor for the Far East?" To date, Mini-Melts has 16 standard flavors but more than 50 flavor combinations that vary per region.

For instance, the company has two U.S. production plants, one in Connecticut and one in Florida. Mosey says the Connecticut plant develops flavors such as cappuccino or Oreo cookies and cream. The Florida operation is credited for inventing fruity flavors such as mango, lemon and tropical punch.

'BUSINESS IS BUSINESS'

As for why Mosey opted to sell his publishing company and invest in a cryogenically frozen ice cream company, he explains that two special people played a big role in his decision. "If you look on our Web site, it has a picture of two kids eating Mini-Melts," he says. "Those are my kids."

"I tell people that they can be assured they're getting the best-quality product because we make it for those kids. I know that sounds corny, but it's actually true. Business is business. I don't have to do this particular business, but my kids really enjoy it. They couldn't care less if their dad owns real estate in Dallas, but if he owns an ice cream company, that's fun and exciting. It's pretty much the only ice cream they'll eat, so it has to be the very best." ❄️



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