

Humboldt Creamery: Just How Local Is It?



By Amy Waldrip
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As the Co-op's Eat Local Challenge continues and we consider our local dairy options, the first company that comes to mind is Humboldt's biggest dairy plant, the Humboldt Creamery.

With all the talk of scandal and business plans gone awry, it's easy to gloss over an important and prevailing question: Just how local is Humboldt Creamery?

We went to take a brief tour and to speak with the new General Manager, Robert Acree, to find out.

We met with Acree at the Ferndale plant to discuss where Humboldt Creamery fits into our local community.

Acree came to Humboldt County after working in the ice cream business for over twenty years, in various locations all

over the country. He believes that along with Vermont, Humboldt County has the best tasting dairy.

Humboldt Creamery is an 80 year old dairy plant located in Ferndale. They have produced organic milk products since 2001, and all of the dairy they use is rBST free.

As most readers are probably aware, Humboldt Creamery has recently been acquired by Foster Farms, following financial troubles. Foster Farms' companies include its own brand, Crystal, and Humboldt Creamery. Humboldt Creamery is their primary brand for organic and all natural dairy products.

Acree says that the transfer of ownership of the creamery to Foster Farms has been extremely positive.

Humboldt Creamery now works with 45 local dairies—originally 50. He attributes the slight decline to the state of the economy in general instead of the new ownership.

Humboldt Creamery under Foster Farms employs 100 people, which Acree believes trickles down to the rest of the community.

He says that Foster Farms enables them to establish a wider range of business connections and allows for a bigger opportunity for development.

He states that they have been extremely supportive and up front with the buy out.

Humboldt Creamery purchases 80 percent of its dairy used in fluid milk, powdered milk and ice cream from Humboldt County dairies. Much of the remaining milk for these products is pur-

"Humboldt Creamery is a bit of a mixed bag."



Amy Waldrip tours Ferndale plant with New General Manager of Humboldt Creamery, Bob Acree.

Photos by Melanie Bettenhausen

Humboldt Creamery Products	
Local	VS Non-Local
Fluid Milk	Butter
Powdered Milk	Cheeses
Ice Cream	

Acree says that Foster Farms' distribution connections will help to facilitate the expansion, including the expansion of

ery points out that all of their products are made with the same high quality standards, some of their products are made using decidedly non-local ingredients.

What it comes down to is that Humboldt Creamery is a bit of a mixed bag.

They are a valuable local employer, and a steadfast supplier and supporter of organic and natural milk products.

Much of what you buy from Humboldt Creamery would be considered local food, but some of their products that appear to be local simply just are not.

Just because it says Humboldt Creamery on the package doesn't guarantee it is actually from Humboldt County, or even California.

It's up to you to be informed and decide what local means to you.

chased from dairies in Modesto, CA.

Acree is quick to explain that Humboldt Creamery's intentions are to purchase as much of its milk from local farmers as possible, but as a large business, they can't stop production when they run out of raw materials; therefore, it is necessary for them to have other, non-local sources of dairy.

Currently, Humboldt Creamery sells almost 100 percent of its fluid milk in Humboldt County, but they are hoping to expand their market to the Bay Area.

sales of their organic milk products.

Humboldt Creamery also manufactures ice cream for Costco. While much of Humboldt Creamery's liquid milk comes from local and mostly organic sources, many of the products sold under the Humboldt Creamery name have little to do with Humboldt County.

Humboldt Creamery butter is made using mostly dairy from Modesto in Modesto, and Humboldt Creamery cheeses are made in Utah, utilizing dairy from Utah.

Although Humboldt Cream-

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