

Freshway Foods celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2008

On Feb. 13, 1988, a new company began operations in Sidney. Freshway Foods, with a staff of five employees, began processing fresh-cut produce in an 8,000 square foot building on Wapakoneta Avenue.

"We processed 1,500 pounds of product that day and considered it a good start for our new company," noted Frank Gilardi, the company's chief executive officer.



Gilardi

His report follows:

From that rather modest beginning, Freshway Foods has grown to a major supplier of fresh-cut produce east of the Mississippi. In 2000, the company built a new 60,000 square foot facility. Continued growth and widening market acceptance of its products, a 37,000 square foot addition was added in 2005 pushing the floor space to nearly 100,000 square feet. Also in 2005, the company purchased a 100,000 square foot facility in Sanford, Fla., and began operations there. In 2007, the company's Florida facility experienced a growth rate of 78 percent while the overall company grew 21 percent.

Employment has grown from that starting crew of five, to more than 550 associates today. Patsy Naseman was the first person the company hired in 1988, and today, she is still with the company providing customers with experienced customer service assistance. In 2007, the com-



Photo provided

FRESHWAY FOODS employees align celery sticks coming off the company's new celery processing line that was added in 2007. Throughout its 20-year history, the company has continued to invest in new equipment for its operation.

pany reached a milestone with a combined total between both plants of over one million hours worked without a lost time accident.

As the company grew, the need to control the transportation of its products to its customers became apparent. It was Freshway's determination to do everything it could do to ensure the quality of its products from the plant to its customer's facilities. As a result, early in the company history, it began to operate its own extensive line of trucks. Today, the

fleet has grown to 40 trucks and 60 trailers that can be seen on highways from the Northeast to Southeast 24/7. In an effort to conserve fuel, the company made the decision to equip all of its carriers with alternative power units to reduce idle time and emissions while increasing fuel efficiencies. This action puts Freshway to the forefront in fuel conservation.

Consumers of Freshway Foods fresh-cut produce is broad. Recently, the company received its certification as a Kosher processing facility.

Nearly all produce that is processed now conforms to Jewish dietary guidelines and the company is inspected on a regular basis to ensure continued compliance.

Throughout its 20 year history, Freshway has continued to invest in new equipment for the company. In the beginning, a lot of handwork was required. Today, modern, high-speed processing equipment handles many of the tasks. In 2007, the company added a new celery processing line with an improved washing, sorting and packing system. The new machine has improved product shelf life and overall quality while reducing labor input.

Food safety continues to be a paramount concern for the company. A team of company inspectors monitor product quality from the time it enters the plant to the time it is loaded onto the truck. Freshway has always met or exceeded industry standards to ensure its products are of the highest levels of quality and freshness.

The company continues to explore new markets and new product opportunities. The Freshway line of deli salad kits for major retailers is growing as customers look to add new varieties for their shoppers. While it is too early to predict how a nationwide economic slowdown might effect the dining out habits of Americans, as long as there is the demand for restaurants like Olive Garden, Red Lobster and others to serve its patrons a fresh-cut salad, Freshway Foods will be there to meet the needs of its food service customers.

Avoid The Storm!

Save for a Healthy Future...and don't let that hurricane of medical bills overwhelm you.



Our Health Savings Account combines your high deductible health insurance with an interest bearing, tax favored account. It helps cover the deductible before your insurance starts paying. **A Health Savings Account is the answer you have been waiting for.**

- Triple Tax Savings
- Security
- Affordability
- Flexibility
- Control
- Competitive Interest Rates



- Portability
- Ownership
- Savings
- Payroll Deduction Option
- Funds Easily Accessible by Debit Card or Check

Check with your Healthcare Insurance Provider, and then come into Osgood State Bank for the Health Savings Account with a Healthy Future.

Osgood State Bank
www.osgoodbank.com

Osgood
419-582-2681

Ft. Loramie
937-295-2900

Chickasaw
419-925-4514