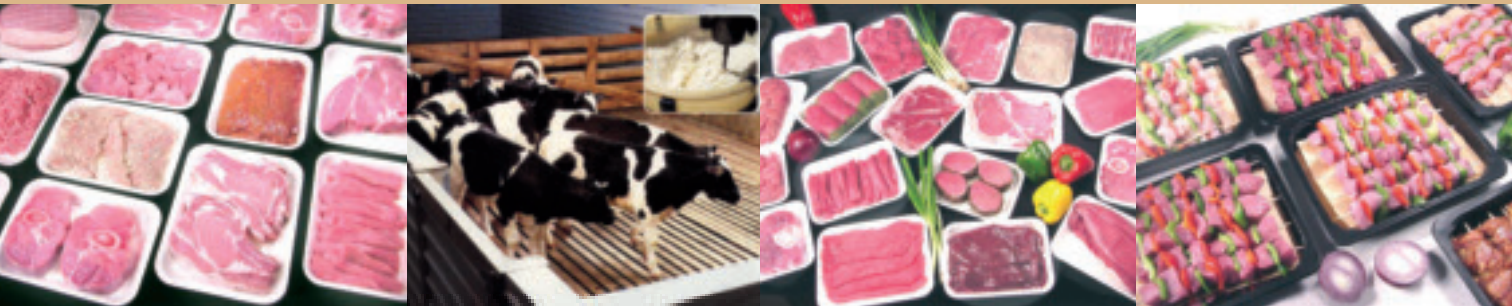


A Classic Cut

With a focus on innovative raising techniques, The Grober/Delft Blue Group takes care of every step in the veal production process from gate to plate

BY CAROL NESHEVICH



When you hear the name Delft Blue, the first thing that pops into your head might be the fine, classic blue-and-white pottery produced in the Netherlands. But if you're in the Canadian food industry, there's another Delft Blue that should immediately spring to mind.

Based in Cambridge, Ont., The Grober/Delft Blue Group is a fully integrated veal company that takes care of every step in getting its product ready for consumers. "The company's strength is its total integration, from feed manufacturing to raising and processing, thereby guaranteeing the consumer quality control from gate to plate," says Arie Nuys, president of Delft Blue Inc., a division of the overall company. "Delft Blue was selected as a name because of the relationship between the fine texture of the veal we produce, and that of the very fine china produced under the Delft Blue name," says Nuys. Like the classic pottery, Nuys is also of Dutch heritage, as is Grober/Delft Blue owner and founder Jurianus Bartelse.

The company began 32 years ago as a feed supplier for the Canadian veal business, an industry that was then still in its infancy. At that time, none of the major meat processors were paying serious attention to veal sales and/or promotion. So by the late 1970s, the company decided to get involved in veal processing as well, first by sharing processing facilities with other packers at Toronto Abattoirs, then through purchasing its own processing plant in Cambridge, Ont. "It was so successful selling veal, the company then got into the

business of growing milk-fed veal, both on company-owned farms and through contracted growers," explains Nuys.

The company's veal products were originally sold under the Provimi label, and then under the name Delft Blue Provimi. Today, the veal products are known simply under the Delft Blue brand. And although operations all fall under one umbrella organization known as The Grober/Delft Blue Group, it's essentially three separate companies or divisions working closely together. Grober Inc. is the feed company, specializing in high-quality, milk-based feed. Delft



"The company's strength is its total integration, from feed manufacturing to raising and processing, thereby guaranteeing the consumer quality control from gate to plate."

Blue Farms is the farming division, where the company's high-quality calves are grown. And the part of the company responsible for processing the meat is simply known as Delft Blue. Although the company's primary focus is veal, it did build a "case-ready facility" 10 years ago to produce finished meat products

for retail, "be it veal, pork, beef or chicken. A substantial part of our business is now case-ready pork and beef," says Nuys. "Another part of our business, although seasonal, is fresh pork, beef, chicken and veal kebabs for retail."

Altogether the organization employs approximately 670 people on eight farms, two meatpacking and three meat-processing plants, as well as one feed manufacturing plant in Canada. The company also has several farms, a meatpacking and a meat-processing plant, and a feed manufacturing plant in the U.S. that employ about 130 people. About 60 per cent of the company's overall business comprises exports, mainly to the U.S. "But we are also very strong in the Middle East,

CUT COSTS!!!

PRODUCE YOUR OWN NITROGEN OR OXYGEN

- Turnkey gas generating systems available for purchase or rent
- Produce nitrogen or oxygen on site from compressed air
- Nitrogen purities to 99.999%
- Oxygen purities to 99%
- Flow capacities from 10 SCFH to 20,000 SCFH
- PSA, VSA and membrane type systems



...using tomorrows technology to cut industrial gas costs today!!!

Advanced Gas Technologies Inc.

230 Don Park Road, Unit 15, Markham, ON L3R 2P7

Tel: (905) 305-0094 Fax: (905) 305-0092
www.adgastech.com sales@adgastech.com

COMPANYPROFILE

especially in countries like United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, and we just resumed trade with Japan," says Nuys.

Nuys is extremely proud of the organization's full-service nature, believing that the best way to ensure quality is to have control over every step in the process, from farm to plate. And today, the "plate" part of that expression often means more than just getting uncooked veal onto grocery shelves or into restaurant kitchens. More and more companies are getting into the "value-added" lines of pre-prepared types of products. Delft Blue is no exception. Nuys calls this "a necessary path in order for the company to maintain and or increase its market share." It's simple, he explains: "The consumer wants to spend less time in the kitchen."

He adds, "Another reason is that in surveys when we ask the consumer why they don't eat veal, the response we get the most is that the consumer doesn't know what to do with it. Having kits like our Italian Bistro takes that fear away." Under the brand Provitelto Italian Bistro, the company now offers Veal Piccata, Veal Marsala and Veal Provencale kits that come with fresh, pan-ready veal cutlets, seasoned sauce, and simple cooking instructions. These kits are being sold in retailers such as Longo's and Bruno's Fine Foods. Each package contains dinner for two, and retails for approximately \$9.90. They've also been given the Health Check seal of approval by the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

The health aspect of veal is another point Nuys is quick to note. "Veal certainly has health attributes that are beneficial to the consumer. It's low in fat, and high in iron and zinc," he says. Grober/Delft Blue's website stresses veal's high protein content as well as its leanness, comparing its fat quantity to that in various other meats. For instance, where a beef sirloin steak has 6.7 g of fat, a veal cutlet has about 1.9 g. The website also points out veal's low sodium content, calling it "an excellent source for sodium restricted diets."

That said, veal still does tend to get a bad rap. Environmental and animal rights activists have never been fans of veal for numerous reasons. The way veal calves are typically raised is the most controversial aspect, with animal rights activists objecting to their being raised in tiny pens (or even crates), frequently tethered. Many believe this to be inhumane treatment. Delft Blue is doing all it can to combat the industry's bad reputation in this area. "Delft Blue is very much involved in educating the public on the husbandry of veal farming. And we've been part of the Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC) from its inception. OFAC's mandate is to educate consumers and others about the science of livestock farming," says Nuys. "Delft has had an open door policy at our farms for almost 20 years, and we've toured several thousands of people from all walks of life through our facilities."

Delft Blue is also very cognizant of the concerns of animal rights and animal welfare groups, says Nuys. "While much of what they advocate is not justified in fact or science, we nonetheless take their concerns into our husbandry practices," he explains. In fact, Delft Blue Farms' raising

Construction



Sika products are accepted by food agencies worldwide, including Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Sikafloor® Covercrete® and Sikafloor® PurCem® flooring systems

Proven Concepts for Industrial Flooring in the Food Industry

Customer satisfaction is the main target for our company. Sika is a global technology-based company with production facilities in over 70 countries worldwide. Sikafloor® Covercrete® and Sikafloor® PurCem® flooring systems are durable, seamless floors that are easily cleaned and maintained to your individual plant and production room requirements. Sika provides floor solutions for: wet and dry process areas, wash stations, coolers, freezers, chemical containment, dry storage and warehouse areas.

Contact Sika Canada at 1-800-933-SIKA (7452) or visit our web site at www.sika.ca to schedule a no obligation appraisal of your plant floors.



COMPANYPROFILE

practices are quite unusual in the North American veal industry. For more than 15 years now, they have been experimenting with “group housing” pens, raising the calves together in large groups as opposed to the typical situation of having one calf per pen. “This eliminates the traditional method of growing calves in individual stalls, which has come under criticism by those who don’t fully understand the husbandry of raising veal calves,” says Nuys. The main objection to group housing by other veal growers is the increased chance of disease spreading, and less opportunity to tend to each individual animal. Delft Blue Farms, however, has worked hard to find solutions to those issues. As Mike Cooper, the organization’s Marketing manager, writes on Grober/Delft Blue’s website, “We are now capable of raising veal in group settings that do not compromise the welfare of the animal and will deliver a product to our customers that is every bit as good and as consistent as that raised in stalls”.

However, points out Nuys, “There is no real detrimental nature to raising calves in stalls.” But he does say there’s some validity to one of the objections from activists — “What is a valid concern is when the calf is tethered in a stall.” Delft



Blue Farms was one of the first veal calf growers in North America to get rid of tethers in stalls, and “those calves that we still raise in stalls are not tethered.” Nuys also stresses that any individual stalls his company uses are large enough for the calves to lie down comfortably and move around in.

As for environmental concerns – especially concerns about manure – Nuys says, “Manure handled correctly in its application to the land is a valuable resource and doesn’t place anyone in danger.” But he does think it’s important to recognize that it’s the company’s responsibility to handle its manure in a way that maximizes its use in the most environmentally friendly way possible. “For many years we’ve used a system we created ourselves to treat manure through an anaerobic digestion process that renders the unsafe forms of its contents into forms that are safe, and yet still provides much-needed crop nutrient inputs.”

The Grober/Delft Blue Group plans to continue on this path of environmental and animal rights awareness as the company grows and evolves. Nuys also hopes the organization will maintain its position as one of the largest “totally integrated” veal companies in North America. And like most food businesses today, with their eyes on the consumer who doesn’t have time to cook, Delft Blue plans to “keep developing products that will make it easier for the consumer to prepare the meat component of the meal,” says Nuys. [FC]



Canadian Dairy Commission
Commission canadienne du lait

THE CANADIAN DAIRY COMMISSION SUPPORTING INNOVATION



The Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC) is committed to promoting growth and innovation in the manufacture and use of dairy products and components. Our new Dairy Marketing Program offers funding support to dairy and food product manufacturers. It facilitates access to the technical support and expertise required to develop new and innovative dairy and finished food products. Projects submitted under the Innovation Support Fund may be eligible for up to **\$25,000** in funding support!

Find out how your ideas can qualify for this and other leading-edge industry support programs by calling **Shana Bailey** at 1-866-366-0676 or emailing sbailey@agr.gc.ca.

www.MILKingredients.ca

Canada