

# Building on Tradition

# MOHAWK DAIRY

Rich Rzeszotarski - President



**Success Magazine:** Mohawk Dairy is a family owned business. Who was the founder, and in what year did the dairy first open?

Rich Rzeszotarski: Mohawk Dairy is a family owned business that was founded on August 15, 1932 by my grandfather, Zygmunt Rzeszotarski. The family tradition was carried on by my father Richard, who now serves as Chairman, and is currently operated by my brother Robert and myself. My father now serves as chairman, I am the current president, and Robert is the vice president of the company.

**SM:** Rich, when did you begin working at the dairy?

RR: I began working at the dairy after graduating from Siena College with a bachelor's degree in marketing and management in the spring of 1995. I took over the daily operations of the business in the fall of 2000.

**SM:** What makes Mohawk Dairy an industry standout?

RR: Mohawk Dairy remains an industry standout because we still follow the same basic principles on which the company was founded. Those principles include delivering a quality product at a fair price with exemplary customer service and attention to detail.

**SM:** What products do you sell?

RR: Mohawk Dairy is a full-line dairy distributor. We sell all dairy products from fluid milk and cream, cultured products, cheeses, butter, ice cream, soft serve ice cream and custard mixes, juices, drinks, and water.

**SM:** How can an interested customer purchase your products?

RR: Our products can be purchased throughout the entire Capital District area via our fleet of DSD delivery trucks. Our distribution area now covers approximately a one hundred mile radius of Amsterdam. Wholesale accounts can be set up by contacting our sales department via Internet ([www.mohawkdairy.com](http://www.mohawkdairy.com)) or by phone. Our products can also be purchased at our dairy store which is a small supermarket format adjacent to the distribution center. We currently serve over 650 customers including schools, hospitals, nursing homes, grocery and convenience stores, camps, restaurants, and ice cream stands. We specialize in serving the foodservice industry.

**SM:** To what do you attribute the longevity of your family's business?

RR: Our longevity in the business can be attributed to our ability to change and adapt to the changing business climate. These changes are made while still adhering to the basic principles that the business was founded on.

**SM:** Why is operating a family run business meaningful to you personally?

RR: Running a family owned business that has been passed down through generations is meaningful because of the tradition and history that is part of the business. You owe it to the family members before you who worked so hard to keep the business going. It is because of their hard work that you have the business to come into in the first place.

**SM:** How has the dairy changed since 1932?

RR: The dairy has changed in many ways since 1932. The first plant was 900 square feet and bottled everything in glass bottles. In 1962, a new 10,500 square foot plant was built on Forest Avenue. In 1972, the building was expanded to over 21,000 square feet with the addition of the new store. Finally in 1992, the new cooler was added on to accommodate the steady growth of the company and the many new products added to our product mix.

**SM:** How have you remained successful in such a competitive industry?

RR: I believe that we have been able to stay successful while competing with the large corporate giants because of our founding principles. We treat every customer the same no matter what size they are and also offer many special services that bigger companies are not able to offer them. We have flexibility in our decision making strategies as well as our company policies. We can make quicker decisions without having to go through all of the bureaucratic levels of a bigger corporation.

**SM:** What future hopes and plans do you have in mind for Mohawk Dairy?

RR: My future hopes and plans are that we can remain competitive and successful for many years to come. I would like to see continued growth and prosperity of the company while not sacrificing any of the core values that have enabled us to become what we are today.



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