

# Hullabamoo

## Plenty of good bull for sale at Texas A&M

Through its research, teaching and extension work, Texas A&M University's animal science department generates a bevy of beef, pork, lamb and dairy products.

In addition to sinfully rich butter and ice cream, A&M sells lean meats, with the biggest selection of lamb in the area.

And that's no bull.

**By Christine Stephenson**  
**Eagle staff writer**

In August 1984 the milk shakes stopped flowing at the Texas A&M Creamery.

The public outcry shook the heavens.

When the tiny, 30-year-old sales room at the center of the A&M campus closed, some thought they had seen the last of some of the best ice cream on earth. Devout dairy lovers who did their homework found out that sales continued just half a mile away, west of Wellborn Road in A&M's new Rosenthal Meat Science and Technology Center.

Now, more than five years later, Ray Riley says some still don't realize just what lies "across the tracks."

"It's still here!" says Riley, who manages the meat lab that once supplied the Creamery's sales room with meat products. Now the Creamery (officially, the Texas A&M Dairy Products Laboratory) wholesales milk, cheese and the famous Aggie ice cream to the Rosenthal Meat Science and Technology Center's sales room, where they are sold with an array of beef, pork and lamb products in a much larger and more modern sales area.

"There are a lot of students who don't know we're here because they don't make it to this side of the

campus," Riley says. "And then there's a lot of old-timers and former students who say, 'Oh, we didn't know y'all were over here.' And really, this place is easier to get to if you're driving, and a lot nicer, a lot more convenient than the old center."



Although malts, shakes and cones made from Texas A&M ice cream have had a loyal following for years on campus, many don't realize just how many meat and dairy products are manufactured and sold at the university. The products get their start as tools for teaching, research and extension, says Frank Chase, Creamery manager.

"That's the purpose of the whole university," Chase says. "But 30 years ago there was much more research in the dairy side than there is now." He says the Creamery is now used primarily for teaching and extension. It employs four full-time employees and three student workers, who are taught about all aspects of the dairy industry.

Chase estimates that every dairy plant in Texas has at least one Aggie.

Students play a major role in manufacturing the products that come from the Rosenthal Center, Riley says. The hogs used for pork products are raised at the A&M Swine Center, and most of the cattle come from the school's research station at McGregor. The

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sheep come from stock shows or feed lots.

“During the school year we’ll come into contact with 1,000 students that we’re teaching something in the area of meat science,” Riley says. Animal science students get hands-on experience, starting with slaughtering a hog, lamb and cow, then cutting the meat, manufacturing sausage and curing hams and bacon, he says.

Both the Rosenthal Meat Science and Technology Center and the Dairy Products Laboratory are self-supporting. The facilities sell their products to the public at the Rosenthal Center’s sales room to cover the costs of supplies, maintenance and salaries. In addition to using the students who provide products through their classes, the meat lab employs two storekeepers for the sales room, three meatcutters, a manager and 10 student workers who do everything from slaughtering to packaging, inventory and sales. Riley says he tends to hire animal science students as sophomores and keep them until they graduate.

“We’re not teaching a student to be a slaughterer or a meatcutter or a sausage-maker,” Riley says. “We’re exposing them to as many industry ideas and functions so that when they get a degree and go out into industry, hopefully they can be that slaughterer’s or meatcutter’s boss. And we’ve been able to do a good job with that with this facility.”

The meat lab moved into the new, \$4 million Rosenthal Center in 1983, vacating the Animal Industries Building where it had been located since the 1930s. The old, small lab used ’30s technology to provide products that were sold paper-wrapped and frozen in a small stand-up freezer across the street in the Creamery sales room, Riley says.

“In the old facility, you either got it this way or you didn’t get it,” Riley says. “We’ve come out of the dark ages. They used to sell a lot of side and hind-quarters that were precut and prewrapped. That was the way it was going to be. Now I take orders.”

The move to the Rosenthal Center meant moving to advanced technology in meat tenderizing, sausage manufacturing, vacuum packaging, retailing and merchandising. The new technology has also allowed the center to generate up to 20 new products and improve on many other processes. Riley says

the center can now provide any cut of meat with special orders.

Now all cured and smoked meat products are sold fresh, and all others are sold frozen. Riley says he would like to be able to sell all of the meats fresh, but because they are generated by teaching, research and extension activities, he has no control over his supply. Right now, for example, he has 2,400 pounds of lamb waiting for customers — but the average American eats only 2.3 pounds of lamb per year.

“I know we slaughter more lamb than anybody in the area, and probably have more lamb to move than anybody in the area,” Riley says. “This week we’re slaughtering 20-something. So, yeah, we’ve got lamb!”

“That would be an item I would like to (sell) more of. It’s fresh, it’s American.”

**E**very day, dairy products are manufactured in an inconspicuous building whose small size belies its importance. Located next to the Pavilion on Spence Street, the Creamery is the birthplace of milk, butter, six kinds of cheese, frozen yogurt and eight flavors of ice cream. The products are made with milk from the A&M Dairy Cattle Center and are served in the A&M dining halls or packaged and sold wholesale to restaurants, bakeries or retailers.

A tour of the facility and an explanation of the processing procedures for any of these products is easy to come by, and Chase says he answers several calls a day about everything from yogurt cultures to the equipment one would need to manufacture ice cream or cheese.

“That’s extension,” Chase says. “We do this for free. Essentially you are paying for it out of your tax dollars, even though we are self-funded, but that’s what we’re here for.”

The meat lab, too, shares its technology and research findings as a public service. In cooperation with the Texas Beef Industry Council, it teaches different aspects of the meat industry to up to 10 industry groups each year, Riley says.

“We also conduct studies here on tenderness, packaging, cutability, merchandising,” Riley says. “We

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are under meat inspection by the Texas Department of Health, and our animals and processing are inspected just like any other facility.” Riley says most research involves comparing the flavor and other properties of meats from different animal breeds, or animals fed different feed or fed on different schedules.

**A** bigger reliance on retail sales is in the future of the A&M Creamery, Chase says.

“We’re really trying to change our focus of being a milk plant for the dining halls to being more of a cheese and ice cream plant for the former students,” Chase says. “That way we’re not so dependent on (A&M) Food Services and milk prices, which are very volatile.

“Any and all the profits we do make are spent on the upkeep of the Creamery,” Chase says. “Most of the equipment is antiquated, but the basic technology is always the same. Thirty-year-old equipment is not going to hurt us. It’s stainless steel — it doesn’t wear out.”

But generating new customers is a challenge.

“We have a hard time because of the policies that we have to follow,” Chase says, explaining that the Creamery and Rosenthal Center sales room choose not to advertise because they do not want to give local businesses unfair competition.

The Creamery and meat lab do advertise in campus publications and through a mailing list at the sales room, from which they generate most of their sales for cheese gift boxes, cured hams and other products.

“We can’t go put our products in the Mom and Pop store down the road,” Chase says. “If Mom and Pop want to come to A&M and get it, that’s peachy.

“It’s a fine line that you walk when you solicit business. But anybody can come and buy any of these products any time they want to.”

And the products have staunch supporters in the local area and throughout the state.

“I know there’s a loyal following on our milk and our ice cream and our cheese, and our butter,” Chase says, explaining that some people drive in from out of town to buy large quantities of Creamery products, which they freeze for later use.

“The same thing goes for the meat over there” at the Rosenthal Center, Chase says. “I think their quality of meat, their flavor and tenderness is just very good.”

The Creamery manager especially recommends grilling the Aggie sausage, which he says has a mild flavor and little aftertaste. His other favorites are the bacon, which he says has a heavy smoke flavor and lots of meat, and the T-bone steaks.

The meat lab manager likes to expound on the virtues of A&M’s ice cream, the product of choice for most of his student customers.

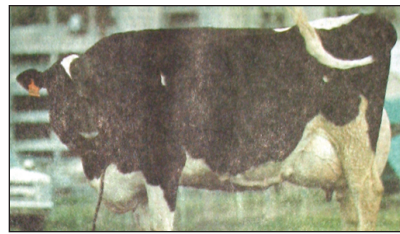
“It’s rich, isn’t it?” Riley asked as I slurped at a dip of French Silk.

Yes, it is.

“That’s because it’s got a lot of butter fat. It’s good.”

## About our cover cow

The Holstein cow featured on our cover has Texas A&M tag number 3051. She is a 6½-year-old milk cow at the Texas A&M University Dairy Cattle Center, where she is milked twice a day to produce 100



pounds, or about 12 gallons, of milk, says Curtis Braswell, Dairy Center manager. Her sire is Sweet-haven Tradition.

Cow 3051’s milk goes to the Dairy Products Laboratory, where cream is spun off with a centrifuge and used for products such as butter and ice cream. Most Dairy Center milk is used in the Texas A&M dining halls, and the rest is used for other Creamery products or sold to AMPI and distributed in Houston, Braswell says.

The familiar spotted Holstein is a very popular dairy cow, says Frank Chase, Creamery manager.

“Those are milk-making machines!” Chase says.

“Compared to a Jersey cow they’ll do a lot more gallons a day.

“A Jersey cow puts out a lot more butterfat, but with those Holsteins, that’s a lot of milk.”



## A&M Creamery, Meat Lab respond to customers' wants

## Eagle staff writer

Texas A&M's Creamery and Rosenthal Meat Science and Technology Center are two businesses where the customer is always right.

Although up to now the Creamery and Meat Lab have had no formal channels for getting customer feedback about their products, their managers have heard enough by listening to their customers and research results to know that two big trends will affect the meat and dairy products of the future: less fat and more convenience.

"I think the one thing that we're really seeing is fat and calories," says Frank Chase, manager of the Texas A&M Dairy Products Laboratory. "The goal now is to eat less fat, but we still have those who like the ice cream with all the fat in it. I do not think it will hurt our business by selling lower-fat products. If anything, it will increase, because we're serving a wider variety of tastes."

Chase already sells ice milk to the A&M dining halls and skim milk in bulk to restaurants, but he will soon offer skim milk in half gallons at the Rosenthal Center's sales room. He also plans to sell live-culture frozen yogurt in several berry flavors within six months.

And then there's quarg. The cheese with the funny name is made from skim milk. It may seem unfamiliar to you, but it has a following around the world, especially in Germany, where it is used to make lower-fat cheesecakes.

Quarg is a farm-fresh (not aged) cheese with a slightly acidic flavor and pastelike texture. Texas A&M started manufacturing it in 1984 and is still only one

of three manufacturers in the United States, Chase says. He sells most of the Aggie quarg to Whole Foods Markets in Houston and Austin and to German bakeries in the Copperas Cove/Killeen area.

Because it contains almost no fat, quarg is not very creamy. Chase likes to add a little skim milk to improve the texture, then garlic powder, onion

and chives to use on baked potatoes instead of sour cream, which contains a whopping 20 percent fat. He also mixes it with powdered Italian dressing mix and skim milk for a dip.

“When you mix it in with herbs and spices, it’s really good,” he says. “It also has no salt, so you can add that. If you add honey, it makes a great breakfast spread. It’s very versatile.”

But when it comes to fat in a good-tasting form, Chase has the answer. The A&M Creamery doesn't hold back on the ingredients for its much-loved eight flavors.

“We don’t buy brand XYZ cheap vanilla flavoring,” Chase says. “We buy the bourbon va-

nilla flavoring to make a better-tasting product.”

It seems the vanilla ice cream-lovers like it just the way it is. The French silk fans are also quite content with their chocolate-mousse flavor and flakes of bittersweet chocolate that melt at room temperature.

And don't even try messing with the formula for the chocolate ice cream, Chase warns. He once tried to change from the lighter Dutch style to a darker, bittersweet Swiss style, but backed down when the flavor's fans had a cow.

“Chocolate people are funny,” he says.





# Tastes change

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Over at the Rosenthal Center, manager Ray Riley has developed new products with health and convenience in mind.

“It’s people,” he says. “More what they want, more what the lifestyle demands.” His philosophy has led him to install a new comment box in the sales room to supplement what he learns from research and his extension work with industry groups.

Since moving from the old meat lab in the Animal Industries Building in 1983, the facility has been able to offer a wider selection of meat cuts, and changing tastes and needs have called for more convenient sizes and less fat.

“We have always closely trimmed our cuts,” Riley says, “and then three years ago we came out with less than ¼ inch. So on most of our cuts, nearly all of the outside fat has been removed.

“The consumer says, ‘Take the fat off the outside, but don’t take my taste away.’”

Riley took his cue from a Texas A&M study that

found that people like it lean.

“Everybody knew people wanted leaner meats, but up until then there hadn’t been a study to document it,” Riley says. The move to the closer trim was adopted by most grocery store chains soon after the study was published, he says.

Riley also offers almost all of his meat cuts boneless now.

“The only beef cuts with bones in it would be short ribs and T-bones. People don’t want it. Why cook it, why store it, why have it if you can’t eat it?”

Riley holds his hands a foot apart and describes the size of the bone-in chuck roasts that the meat lab sold at the old facility.

“I can remember as a kid, my mother making the roast for Sunday dinner and then we were eating it for the whole week,” he says. “Today’s consumer doesn’t like roast, doesn’t have time for a roast, or was like me and grew up eating roast and doesn’t want it for Sunday dinner!”

The modern roast is small enough to fit in a slow cooker, where it can be left to its own devices, he says.

“We’re trying to provide our customers with service and more convenience, because everybody’s living at a little faster pace,” Riley says. “We’re going to try and make it a little easier.

“My next challenge is to start shipping steaks and other items.”



Dave McDermid

**Bryan-College Station Eagle**

A&M Creamery manager Frank Chase stirs a vat of quarg, a low-fat fresh cheese.