

Nueske's Applewood Smoked Meats Company Video

1933, in the tiny Wisconsin village of town of Wittenberg. It's the heart of the great Depression. Times were hard for young RC Nueske's family. RC decided to try selling some of his family's traditionally smoked meats to ease their hardships. Nueske had learned the family's old-world smoking techniques and recipes from his father, who emigrated to northern Wisconsin from Prussia in the 1880's.

RC loaded up the back of this automobile with the Nueske family's fresh smoked hams, sausages, and bacon and traveled through Wisconsin's northwoods, stopping at the many resorts in the area to see if people wanted to sample his wares. Although money was tight, people knew a good thing when they tasted it and word of RC Nueske's Applewood Smoked Meats traveled far and fast.

Today, the third generation of the Nueske family still honors those original time-tested recipes and methods of patiently curing and slow smoking their fine specialty meats.

The product itself is very special. The process we do is time-tested. No one else is doing it.

It's still the old way of smoking over real applewood and leaving that product in there 24 hours. We hang the bellies. We put them in individual smokehouses, and we smoke them for a long time, and we let nature do its work.

We actually build our smokehouses from scratch and we have a very old-fashioned method. Everything is smoked 24 hours or more over the actual logs of applewood.

You get good applewood from people, you know, that bring it in, you know, and then we just stack it in the barn. And when gets low down, then we saw this, you know, out there. Split it and bring it over here.

I'm Mike Zoromski and I'm the smokemaster at Nueske Meats. Well, I don't think there's anybody that does what I do. Not like *like* I do cuz we're totally different than anybody else. A smokehouse at Nueske's is s a single truck smokehouse, meaning that that one rack of bacon goes, or ham's or whatever, goes into that single house and has its own wood and heat supply. Kids, I call them because they all have personalities.

It's like fine wine making. You need to have your handle on the temperature, the humidity outside, time of year.

I like to pick the houses that I like that work the best for each product.

And that's the hands on. A big company that would look at that, would say, "That's too hands on. We don't wanna have that kinda of process."

There's a lot of variables in there. To play all those variables and blend them all together that's the artisan part of it. And to know those houses, I mean, it's pretty important.

You also get to see the rewards every single time you pull something out. Think after 20 years you wouldn't feel that way, but it hasn't changed from the time I started 'til now. It's a great product and when it shines it's pretty exciting and to see that, if you can nail it and you see all the consistency every day, that's pretty rewarding.

When you fry up our bacon and you can smell the sweet smoky aroma and you can see everything browning and caramelizing and it's just, you know, filling your house with this great smell or filling your kitchen with this great smell. And then you finally get to eat a piece of this bacon that's just perfectly, perfectly browned and crispy. And you feel this melty fat in your mouth and it's sweet and smoky and it's just wonderful. It's wonderful stuff.

The quality like when you get to bite into it and it's so yummy. And we spent many hours here working, right? And we spend Saturdays and other times and weekends here. It all makes it worthwhile that the customer is happy.

A lot of family companies say, "Yeah, we're a family company." But it's kind of in name only. It just seems like this company has all of its employees are like family here. And they treat it like their own.

It's like our business, you know, so. I call them my smokehouses cuz, you know, I always joke around that it's Mike Zoromski's smoked meats packaged by Nueske's cuz I feel like they're mine. And, so, they're like families.

They are a family business. It started. They're proud of the family that brought the product over from Europe. They're proud that they had to struggle through the Depression and then a business evolved out of it and they haven't forgotten the people that got them that business. The workers. The people that are supporting and carrying on that legacy.

They've never been tempted to cheapen the product so they could get more sales. They've all stuck to their core principles of this is what who we are, and we will, we're not out to be the biggest, we're out to be the best.

Nueske's is best known for our bacon. It's really got our signature flavor and it's the most popular thing we sell, but our hams have a nice sweet smoke and we hand glaze them with sugar and spices and actually caramelize all the sugar and honey and everything right on the ham.

It is a beautiful process to watch. Every single one is done by hand.

We do smoked chickens, smoked pheasants, smoked duck breast.

When you get chefs from all over the country that want your product, it's a great feeling. I think it's a great feeling for everybody.

We look at it, make sure it's perfect. We constantly are taste testing. Always having that delicious, smoky, intense flavor. The color. All of it matters.

Bigger companies would love to know how do we get this flavor. Ummm, so I'm not gonna tell you the recipe of how we do the bacon. Umm, if that's ok with you.

We did what we set out to do. It is a lot of team pride and a lot of personal pride too.

Their image and their belief is in doing things right. No hurry. Taking your time. Making a good product. Taking your time and serving that customer. You know, we don't wanna be known as a company that produces billions of pounds. We wanna be known as a company that produces good quality product that people desire.

Customer service and product flavor and consistency is really what drives everything.

It's been a lot of good moments. There really has been. It's a constant evolution. I think there's so many good things that come with time and patience.