

Century-old, Wisconsin-made NESCO roasters a holiday staple

BY **BARRY ADAMS**
Wisconsin State Journal

MADISON (AP) — Rick Carey knows he has a branding issue even though most Wisconsinites are well acquainted with the name.

His 100-year-old company a block from the West Twin River makes food dehydrators, slow cookers, coffee urns and hand mixers. There are egg cookers, steamers, pressure cookers and hot plates.

For hunters who want to process their own game, the offerings include meat slicers, grinders, vacuum sealers, equipment to make jerky and a whole line of spices.

They all carry the NESCO name. And not one of those products is what comes to mind for many, the Wisconsin State Journal reported.

For those of us who grew up in Wisconsin, a NESCO is what is hauled up from the basement or out of the pantry a few times each year to cook a ham, whole turkey or keep gallons of baked beans or chili piping hot for a family gathering.

We're talking, of course, about the NESCO roaster, a classic Wisconsin cooking appliance that will be working overtime in the coming weeks for Christmas, New Year's and Super Bowl parties.

"It's a brand. It's not really a product," said Carey, president of The Metal Ware Corp., which manufactures NESCO products. "For a long time, it was really just a Midwestern thing."

That was until the 1980s, when QVC came along and started selling the roasters on live TV to millions of households around the country for about \$200 apiece. The boom in sales required 24 hours, seven days a week of production in Two Rivers, while porcelain coating for the roasters was made in nearby Algoma. But when other companies like Ham-



ilton Beach and GE began making their own versions of the roasters, prices began to drop, and in the early 2000s production was moved to China.

"We made a Cadillac roaster," Carey said. "Demand required it to be less expensive."

An 18-quart NESCO roaster can now be purchased at places like Farm & Fleet, Walmart and Kohl's for about \$50. Roasters make up about 5% of Metal Ware sales, Carey said.

NESCO roasters have long been a part of our family. My grandmother had one in her kitchen next to her oven that was in use whenever our extended family crammed into her small bungalow in the village of Wales. When our oven went out for a time in the 1980s, my mother broke out the NESCO as a substitute. That's how we learned the NESCO could be used to bake a pizza, if it was cut up before cooking.

Today, we have two of the roasters in our basement that have been used at graduation and birthday parties, wedding rehearsal dinners and to keep smoked brisket warm during fantasy football draft nights.

So when a note from Metal Ware's public relations firm came through my email a few weeks ago pitching a story about jerky spices, I took a hard pass. Instead, I wanted to learn about NESCO roasters.

They were first developed in 1931 by the National Enameling and Stamping Co. in Milwaukee and became popular replacements for cooking in a wood stove in rural areas as the availability of electricity began to grow. Sales fell as electric and gas ovens became more popular, and the company eventually fell on hard times. NESCO production moved to New York before the owners of Metal Ware purchased the NESCO brand out of receivership in the 1980s and moved production back to Wisconsin.

Carey grew up in Two Rivers, graduated from Marquette University and earned a law degree at UW-Madison. After working in private practice for many years, he became the in-house counsel for Metal Ware in 2005. An avid hunter and angler, Carey left the company in 2009 to start his own company making game processing equipment, but purchased

Metal Ware in 2016.

But while our visit to the Metal Ware headquarters and manufacturing facility didn't include roaster production, we were able to observe assembly of dehydrators and watched as massive presses punched out cake pans and covers from sheets of aluminum. The company also is big into plastic injection molding and makes commercial-size ice cube bins for bars, orange plastic safety coverings for electrical wires, plastic parts for lawnmowers and even minnow buckets.

Carey is now eyeing expansion plans that include more production space and new corporate offices that would include a museum to show off early Metal Ware products that included toys. He also has an attic filled with vintage NESCO roasters that would also be displayed. Carey is pretty certain they all could cook a bird, a tribute to their durability.

"There's not a single one of them that doesn't work because there's no moving parts," Carey said. "They're really simple and they last forever."

» HOUSING

FROM PAGE A1

The new funds will allow for the development of at least another 46 units, of which 20 are to be rental apartments, 12 rental homes and 14 privately owned homes.

"This allocation from the tribe will allow us to keep the development train moving forward and give us options to develop different types of housing," Cloud said. "One difference in the kind of housing that will be built using the ARPA funding as opposed to using HUD money is that the new housing will not be subject to the kind of restrictions that are place on HUD homes. Under HUD regulations, people with criminal or drug records are automatically excluded from consideration as occupants."

That excluded some of the tribal members who most need housing, Red Cliff Tribal Planning Administrator Nicole Boyd said.

"Well, we can't just leave people homeless because there are rules," she said.

Red Cliff Tribal Chairman Christopher Boyd expects plenty of applicants for the new apartments and houses.

"A lot of our current housing is tied to HUD funding, so there are income guidelines and such. This allocation will free up housing for working professionals in our community who can't access our current housing. This is an avenue where we can open more housing opportunities for the working class," he said. "With this allocation, we can set our own parameters and occupancy policies."

Christopher Boyd said the new housing development was part of the vision the Red Cliff tribe has for its future, which includes a buy-back program for land within the reservation.

While the ARPA funding is a one-time infusion of federal money, it is being structured to be the basis of a rotating fund that could be used for further developments

"What the tribal council envisions with this investment is that it will turn itself over. With the rents that are generated through this development, it can go on to fund further developments," he said.

The 46 new housing units will represent a big improvement for tribal members, said Nicole Boyd.

"People have all these barriers they may be dealing with," she said. "Without a dwelling, it's really hard to tackle the other issues they may be dealing with. Looking at the data shows how overcrowded our houses are, how much need there is, based on waiting lists."

Nicole Boyd said Census reports showed that the reservation needs at least 153 housing units to meet needs in Red Cliff.

"And that doesn't include tribal members across the world who may be wanting to move back home," she said.



Cloud



Boyd

BAYFIELD COUNTY COURT REPORT

CHVATIK, Mark A., Mason, Driving while intoxicated-fourth offense, driving under the influence of a controlled substance-fifth offense, state prison, local jail, extended supervision, \$3,738.

HANSON-LOVE, Richard V., Green Bay, criminal damage to property as a repeat offender, local jail, probation, \$1,163.

JOHNSON, Christopher B., Washburn, domestic disorder-

ly conduct, probation, \$1,131.

TOPPING, Daniel T., Bayfield, possession of methamphetamine, resisting arrest, possession of a controlled substance, probation, \$1,415.

YAWAKIE-PELTIER, Benjamin R., Minneapolis, disorderly conduct, local jail, \$465.

» RESIGNATION

FROM PAGE A1

Documents obtained from the district do not specifically address the cause of the separation.

"You will not be required to perform any work duties for Ashland after the separation date..." the deal with Olson stated.

There seemed to be no performance

issues or any allegations of wrong doing prior to his resignation. As recently as February, the board gave Olson glowing review in his annual performance evaluation.

Former Hurley School Superintendent Chris Patritto has been appointed interim Superintendent until a replacement is named. He also has declined to comment on the departure of his predecessor.

The board has hired the Cooperative Educational Service Agency to search for the new superintendent. Agency Administrator Dominick Madison has said the board plans to begin interviewing candidates the week of Jan. 10. From there, the board will conduct a second round of interviews with the finalists, with hopes to select the right candidate by the end of the month, he said.

» BUSES

FROM PAGE A1

In order to make the service sustainable, a reliable source of funding was needed, and a plan informing residents about the availability of the service had to be in place.

Committee members, two of whom are county board members, knew that there were funds available from the American Rescue Plan Act, and approached County Administrator Mark Ables-Allison, who support-

ed the idea, taking it to the county board, where it was unanimously approved.

The plan, which has also been approved by the Department of Transportation, covers the project's expenses for two years at a total cost of \$76,000 a year, of which \$25,000 a year is to be matched by the county. When fare box revenues are taken into account, the grant will cover about 59% of the project cost, Daoust said.

The new service will

require about three part-time drivers and will be available 50 hours a week, to and from any address in Bayfield County as well as to Hayward or Ashland, where riders can make connections that cover Ashland and Sawyer counties, all the way to Rice Lake and Mellen.

"We are seeing that most people are going to want to go to either Hayward or Ashland for medical appointments," Daoust said. "This is going to fill the gaps in Bay-

field County where there isn't service already. It's going to make a lot of connections."

Daoust said the service will begin once drivers are hired, shortly after the beginning of the year, using handicapped-accessible vans.

The system will require riders to make appointments in advance. Fares have not yet been set, but as public transportation, the fares are subsidized so, for example, the current charge for a ride from Ashland

to Iron River is \$5 each way.

Linder said it's hard for people who have access to cars to understand just how valuable the service will be to its clients.

"It is a foundation for so many to get their needs met, or just to get to work or to get their hair done, whatever it may be. Not having transportation limits people's ability to be vested in the community, if they don't have he wheels to do it," she said.

Gallik said the service

also will provide him with some peace of mind.

"It's a pretty important thing for a person to be able to get out and do the things they need to do without always having to be bothering a neighbor, a friend or a relative," Gallik said. "It can get to be pretty cumbersome. It will be nice not to have to do that."

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