NEW MEXICO FRESH FOODS...WE GROW INNOVATION

Today local food and beverage manufacturers wanting to increase their products’ food safety and shelf life can do so right here in Bernalillo County. *New Mexico Fresh Foods LLC*, 5600 Venice Ave. NE, is one of only 30 food processing facilities in the country offering High Pressure Processing (HPP) as a service to other food manufacturers. Known as “HPP tolling,” it is widely used in food manufacturing to extend the shelf life and food safety of fresh foods without the use of chemical preservatives or heat pasteurization. Before opening its 20,000 sq. ft. operation in 2021, area food processors needed to transport their items to Dallas, Denver, or Los Angeles for HPP tolling. That transport can take a toll on production costs, as Kelly Egolf, founder of New Mexico Fresh Foods, can attest.

“Verde Juice, now a brand owned by New Mexico Fresh Foods, has been making beverages from 100% plant-based ingredients since 2014,” Kelly shares. “To ensure food safety, quality, and extend shelf life, we drove our beverages from New Mexico to Colorado for HPP tolling. We know firsthand the importance of food safety and the bottom line, so we decided to move that step in-house and make it available to other food processing companies. We want to partner with local businesses here and throughout the Southwest to bring food items with higher food safety and extended shelf life to market,” Kelly continues. Right now, New Mexico Fresh Foods customers are in New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Arizona, and Nevada.

*Keep the color and the crunch AND add days to shelf life*

Why do food companies choose High Pressure Processing? Because it removes several dangerous bacteria such as Listeria, Salmonella and E. coli without affecting the foods’ nutritional value or fresh characteristics. HPP maintains food vibrancy, eye appeal, and flavor. The process extends the safe refrigerated shelf life up to 10 times longer meaning that it can be sold to markets further away and be on the shelf longer at the grocer or at home.

What foods are eligible for HPP applications? Packaged liquid and high-moisture-content solid foods such as cold brew beverages, sliced deli meats, soft cheeses, fresh salsa, and hummus to refrigerated baby food, juice, potato salad, pulled pork, and trays of lasagna. Eligible products must be in flexible packaging and have some moisture to transmit the hydrostatic pressure.

HPP is not a new concept; it is a concept that has been improved with science and technology. HPP uses pressure in a cold-water bath application to inactivate harmful bacteria rather than using a heat pasteurization process. While HPP creates a better product Kelly explains, the enhancement does add to the manufacturing costs.

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Design underway for improvements at both Paseo Del Norte and Unser Boulevards

Residents, commuters, and businesses on the West side will benefit from future road improvements that are now in the design stage. Supported by local, state, and federal governments, these changes will create better, safer highways and alleviate traffic congestion at both Paseo Del Norte and Unser Boulevards. Initiated by the City of Albuquerque, the project addresses roadway cross-sections for Paseo Del Norte (from Calle Nortena to Rainbow Blvd.) and Unser (from Kimmick Dr. to Paradise Rd.). Currently, the design work focuses on expanding the roadways to four traffic lanes, adding turn lanes, safety medians and a paved multi-use trail. Additional improvements will be made by landowners in these select areas at a later date.

These improvements seek to remedy existing major congestion issues in these West side corridors and also contribute to faster response times for emergency vehicles serving nearby neighborhoods. Further, these improved highways will provide opportunities for new businesses as access to these areas will be increased. The design phases are being performed now, and some will be completed by early 2023.

“When determining if HPP is right for your food item, many factors need to be considered, including what grocery stores are looking for to guarantee food safety. We know—we’ve done the math for our own beverages.” Product development services offered by the company include meeting with customers to help them explore market advantages and analyze costs associated with HPP tolling. “Also,” Kelly continues, “sometimes recipes may need tweaking for HPP and we can assist. These are all of things that we did when creating our Verde beverages. We have walked in their shoes.”

Other Services Available at New Mexico Fresh Foods

In addition to HPP tolling, New Mexico Fresh Foods co-manufactures cold beverages, specializing in juice and cold-brew, and can produce and repackage food products into HPP-compatible containers. Freezer and cold storage space is available for lease too. Founded in 2019, it is a merger between New Mexico Fresh Foods and Verde Foods, which moved its production from Santa Fe to Bernalillo County in 2021. Currently, New Mexico Fresh Foods has one HPP tolling machine and the facility is prepped to accommodate a second.

“The support of Commissioner Walt Benson and the entire Bernalillo County Board of County Commissioners has been instrumental in making it possible for us to have HPP tolling here, and we appreciate being part of this thriving food business community,” Kelly says. “New Mexico Fresh Foods is here to make products that meet or exceed food safety requirements and that maintain their freshness for as long as possible. We look forward to teaming up with local and Southwest companies to get more NM-grown foods to market near to home and beyond.”

For more information, contact New Mexico Fresh Foods 505-821-3403 or visit www.nmfreshfoods.com.
MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Job creation, together with job retention, have always been a cornerstone of economic development. Today there is a third component in the mix and that is attracting employees. Hiring signs are everywhere for retail, hospitality and commercial operations, and career boards are filled with opportunities made more alluring with significant sign-on bonuses. The news is filled with reasons why businesses struggle to maintain employees, and studies, analyses, and opinions offer observations, suggestions, and remedies. One size does not fit all. What is across the board though is the knowledge that a capable and reliable workforce contributes to a healthy economy. We are proactive in our efforts to help make good things happen here.

Currently, in addition to offering financial programming to large enterprises looking to expand, relocate or move to Bernalillo County and business education and information to start ups and smaller companies, BernCo Economic Development is in its third year of managing federal, state and local programming to benefit both individuals and businesses. These programs strive to level a playing field roughened by the pandemic. The results to date indicate that they are working.

First is the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERA) that gives rent and utilities’ aid to individuals whose employment was affected by the COVID lockdown. Payments go directly to the property owner. Being able to continue to live in one’s home increases personal well-being and quality of life. Also, being able to maintain properties supports a healthier housing market.

Second is Premium Pay. This forthcoming program is soon to be formally announced upon final approval by the Bernalillo County Board of County Commissioners. It provides businesses with eligible employees one-time financial support to assist retaining existing essential workers with special compensation. Further, during the first two years of the pandemic, this department had oversight of distributing Small Business Grants to eligible businesses; that program has ended.

Third, solo-preneurs and remote workers remain a focal point. Our goal is to continue to cultivate awareness and business appeal to these individuals. They can work from anywhere and we would like it to be here. Bernalillo County has what these professionals need and want: reasonable cost of living, great weather, diverse cultures, beautiful landscapes, parks and hiking, cultural events and restaurants, breweries, and wineries. This is a promising talent source for us as they are often involved with high tech and engineering companies that make up a significant portion of our existing and expanding business landscape.

Both individuals and businesses drive economic development; both are needed to achieve mutual success. We are here to assist fostering this partnership, and in doing so, making Bernalillo County an even better place to work and live. Let’s talk.

Marcos A. Gonzales

Business Expo
Friday, August 19, 2022 | 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

NM Asian Film Festival
Friday, August 19 | 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

API Marketplace
Friday, August 20 | 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Asianexponm.com

SPONSORED IN PART BY BERNALILLO COUNTY
Local property owners, businesses and citizens!

You are invited to nominate possible brownfield sites in the unincorporated areas of the county that may qualify to be transformed from liabilities into community assets through a $600,000 grant awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). A brownfield site is a property where development, expansion, or reuse may be complicated by the presence, or potential presence, of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.

For more information and to fill out a site nomination form for a brownfield assessment go to: https://www.bernco.gov/economic-development/brownfields-program/

If funding is available, other locations in Bernalillo County could be considered, including within Albuquerque city limits.