

# Modern Era At Tulkoff Begins With New Facility

**T**ulkoff Food Products Inc., a Baltimore institution founded in the early 1920s, is set to move to a brand new facility in Holabird Business Park this month. The move from the property the company has occupied since 1980 to its new setting mirrors Tulkoff's growth and focus on the future stressed by company president and CEO Philip Tulkoff, who has held that post at the family owned company for three years.

Tulkoff's roots go back to the 1920s when Harry and Lena Tulkoff operated a produce stand supplying caterers with fresh fruit and vegetables. By the 1930s, they had opted to concentrate all of their time on their popular horseradish. Tulkoff moved from Lombard Street in East Baltimore to a 1.5-acre location at the former site of the Gunther brewery in 1980. The company opened a second plant near Oakland, CA, nine years ago.

As the once-industrial neighborhood of East Baltimore that had been Tulkoff's home for nearly three decades transformed into a trendy dwelling place for young professionals and empty nesters, the company decided it was time to relocate its 65-person plant. Also driving the need for a move was the lack of efficiency at the old plant that had been created over the years through additions and expansions as the business grew.

The new 80,000 square foot facility located on 26 acres in Holabird Industry Park will increase efficiency and offer some new bells and whistles the company is looking forward to utilizing. Explained Tulkoff, "We designed this facility from the ground-up versus having to retro-fit an already existing building." The three story building is 40 feet tall and was designed to utilize vertical space, a plus as land and property costs in the area continue to rise. There are 50,000 square feet of storage space,



The Tulkoff management team recently gave *Food World* a tour of its new facility in the Holabird Industrial Park. Posing for a photo in the newly racked refrigerated store facility ready to be stocked with freshly produced products are (l-r): Mark Natale, Philip Tulkoff, Tom Shellooe and Paul Rostkowski.

increased cold storage over the old facility and a lab and test kitchen. The company's offices will all be located on the top floor of the building.

Once the decision was made to seek a new site for its operations, Tulkoff and his team decided they would remain in Baltimore. Tulkoff said he wanted to find a location on mass transit lines because most of the company's workers live in the city and take public transportation. There are two bus stops on Holabird Avenue within walking distance of the new plant, he said.

The company is one of the nation's largest maker of prepared horseradish products for major foodservice distributors, re-distributors and restaurants throughout the country. However, it's about more than horseradish for the company, which is illustrated by the fact that their number one product today is actually garlic.

## TULKOFF<sup>®</sup>

### FOOD PRODUCTS, INC.

The majority of Tulkoff's business in its modern era has been in the foodservice sector. However, looking forward, the company has its sights on building its retail business. As Philip explained, "We had some 'accidental' retail business, mostly driven by the strength of our name, and limited mostly to the Baltimore area." Now, Tulkoff is investigating more products it can produce that use the same equipment and facilities as have been used in the past to create horseradish and its famous tiger sauce. For example, the company currently produces cocktail sauce, barbeque sauce, steak sauce, bruschetta toppings, pesto sauce and aioli, as well as sauces and other recipe bases for

use by restaurants. "We produce a wide variety of products," Philip said, "from high end gourmet products that are sold in outlets like Trader Joe's, to low cost items."

In addition to packing products under the Tulkoff name, the company makes and packs a variety of products under other labels, including quite a bit of private label. In fact, overall, the company produces about 1,000 SKUs, taking into account the different products, different size packages and different labels in its repertoire. The company has the capacity to package product in five and eight ounce glass jars, PET packaging, 32 and 64 ounce tubs as well as pails, drums and totes.

Even more impressive is the fact that the company produces to order with only a five-day lead time. Overall, the company produces about 1.25 million cases of product

annually. As Philip puts it, "We are large enough to do a lot, but still small enough to be flexible." So, if someone needs a limited run of just a pallet or two, Tulkoff can accommodate that customer as easily as one that requires a truckload of their item.

About nine years ago, Tulkoff had the opportunity to acquire a facility on the West Coast, which has helped the company increase its distribution and, in return, its efficiency.

Looking forward, Philip is excited about the future of the Baltimore-based company, which has been family-owned throughout its history. Philip is company CEO and operates from the Baltimore facility. His brother Alec is the West Coast operations manager at the company's California facility, which employs about 25. Philip stresses that the company will remain in the family in the future. "If I had wanted to sell," he told us, "I wouldn't have built this new facility. I would have sold our old property and simply left the business."

With a base of a local, family-owned business firmly in place, Philip has been busy adding to the team with several new members from outside the company. Working with Philip to take the company into the future are, among others, Tom Shellooe, executive vice president of operations, and Mark Natale, executive vice president of sales and marketing. Both men brought extensive industry experience to Tulkoff that are helping broaden the company's experience. "We are lucky to have a lot of people who have been with the company for a long time. But I also thought it was important to bring in some new focus as well. I felt it would be a good idea to add people with experience from other backgrounds with a variety of points of view."

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