

January 18, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of our entire organization, I'd like to apologize for the experience and inconvenience that you're dealing with related to the congealed flavored milks that were recently produced at our facility. We take great pride in the number of students that are served our product and take seriously any bad experience that may prevent them from continuing to enjoy milk as they grow older. While the examples you found are ***not a food safety or health risk of any kind***, they are nonetheless very unpleasant.

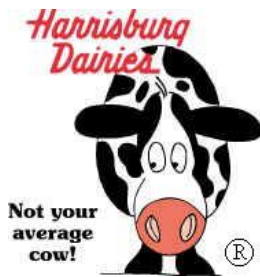
Specifically, that milk is described as "over-stabilized" by our Cocoa and Strawberry Supplier, Forbes Chocolate. Forbes has been our exclusive supplier of all of our Flavored Dairy Ingredients for many, many years. They produce proprietary blends for our company's flavored milks that have been our flagship/signature products for decades. That blend is a combination of Cocoa or Strawberry powder, vanilla and certain stabilizing ingredients, including corn starch, to give the final product more body, richness and an improved mouth feel. Additionally, the stabilizer "binds" the flavoring to the milk during pasteurization, preventing the powder from "falling out" or settling to the bottom of the carton or container after it is made.

For any particular unit to be over-stabilized, that means that it has a higher concentration of the flavor powder blend/stabilizers than the formula or recipe calls for. That can occur in a handful of different ways throughout the production process, as can under-stabilizing. Under-stabilized product will be lighter in color, flavor and thickness while also having the powder settle down to the bottom of the container. Over-stabilized product will be darker, richer and have a thicker consistency more similar to a milkshake directly after production. In some cases, like yours, over-stabilized product will continue to thicken or "set up" as it sits in a container to a congealed consistency.

Unfortunately, your examples have not been the only units that we have found to have this issue in recent months. Relative to our overall volume in flavored school milk, the examples are extremely rare. However, that certainly doesn't make it any less important of an issue to solve and correct. As such, Forbes did dispatch their Quality Control Team to our facility to help investigate and advise. One of the findings was that we were, on occasion, adding more powder than was called for to avoid having partial bags leftover in our dry warehouse after production. Forbes has offered to adjust our packaging size of the powder bags to help us address that in the future.

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While our processes, procedures, personnel and equipment have not changed at any point that coincides with these examples, there were some takeaways and recommendations that came away from their visit in the fall of 2021. Forbes documented and also participated in some retraining with our production team the Best Practices for batching, blending and agitating our flavored milks to assist with additional training and our Quality Control Systems. While there were not any significant or serious findings, there was still some small opportunities to make improvements to our processes to improve consistency. Considering that this issue has sporadically reoccurred in the weeks and months since their visit, we've arranged to bring Forbes back in again for a deeper dive into how any of our products, no matter how few, are still experiencing this issue.

Lastly, and what we feel is a major contributor to this new issue arising in a very established and unchanged process, is our joint effort with Forbes to transition all of our flavor blends to a non-GE/GMO ingredient package. Specifically, the corn starch stabilizer. We had a Jan 1, 2022 deadline for labeling to achieve, and the process was recently completed to replace the current GE corn starch in our flavor blends with a non-GE alternative. While we have the utmost confidence in Forbes to execute this project while maintaining the quality that we've come to expect from them for decades, it stands to reason that there may be a slight variance in how the different corn starches perform in each application they use it in.

With the feedback and examples that Forbes has collected from us in recent weeks in addition to the time they spent observing and tweaking our formulas and processes, they remain confident that this issue will be resolved quickly and that we will return to the consistent, rich and delicious flavored milks that we've built our reputation on since 1931.

I appreciate and welcome any additional questions or concerns that may ever arise in the future.

Thank you!

Alec J. Dewey  
President  
Harrisburg Dairies, Inc.

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