Process Control Helps Ice Cream Shop Keep Its Cool

Erin Hsu, Senior Copywriter, Big Ass Fans

Braum's Ice Cream and Dairy Stores are "kind of a cross between a grocery store, a hamburger restaurant, and an old-fashioned soda fountain," explains Manufacturing Director Bobby Sanders. Braum's directly manages all the steps in its chain, from the dairy cows to the furniture in its 280 retail stores throughout Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri.

"We operate a 12,000-count dairy in Central Oklahoma, and the dairy farms supply all the milk for our dairy processing plant," Sanders says. "We have a full-line dairy and a full-line bakery that provide products for our 280 retail stores. We supply everything for the stores from those two manufacturing facilities."

All of the paper cups, ketchup packets and other dry goods supplying Braum's emerge from a 75,000-sq. ft. warehouse in Tuttle, Okla.

"We load 50 semi-trucks to resupply our ice cream stores every night," Sanders says. "Those guys are pulling orders, palletizing, putting things on trucks and getting everything loaded. Whenever the warehouse was built, not enough attention was given to ventilation. In Oklahoma, the temperature is over 100 degrees all summer long."

Employees turned to a dozen industrial box fans for cooling, but their noise level, airflow and space requirements left a lot to be desired.

"We used to just have little fans everywhere," Sanders says. "There were always noise problems, and they only cover a very small area. You have to be standing right in front of them to get the benefit."

Eight 24-ft. diameter Big Ass Fans® proved to be the ideal solution. Although ceiling fans do not lower the air temperature in a space, the perceived cooling effect can make a person feel significantly cooler. Research has shown when temperatures exceed 77°F, productivity declines. Hot working conditions affect worker morale, absenteeism, turnover, quality of workmanship and the frequency of both accidents and grievances.

"The Big Ass Fans have made a huge difference," Sanders says. "I would say the fans have made that warehouse feel 15 degrees cooler. The employees are a lot happier."

Large diameter, low speed fans are an energy-efficient way to both cool workers in the summer and save heating costs in the winter. Hot air is approximately 5 to 7 percent lighter than cool air in a space and tends to rise to the ceiling. This can

result in a significant temperature difference from floor to ceiling. Large diameter, low speed ceiling fans steadily mix the air to create a uniform temperature throughout the space. The energy savings achieved from reducing the amount of heat escaping through the roof is similar to turning the thermostat down three to five degrees, which can also translate to a serious reduction in operating costs.

Building on that success, Braum's has also added Big Ass Fans to its ice cream plant and furniture workshop, where the fixtures for its line of shops are created.

As Sanders put it, "We're very vertically-integrated. We try to handle everything in our operation ourselves. Making it yourself is the only way to be sure of the quality of a product."

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