

focus

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The monthly news magazine of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce

paramount coffee



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PARAMOUNT COFFEE:

Ending its Reign as Lansing's Best Kept Secret

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PARAMOUNT COFFEE: Ending its Reign as Lansing's Best Kept Secret

With the expansion of its retail market, you may soon see a familiar face in the gourmet coffee aisle of your local supermarket. No, it's not Juan Valdez, it's **Paramount Coffee**, a leading Midwest coffee distributor headquartered in the heart of Lansing.

Coffee drinking is a daily habit and for many it's a staple of life. It is likely that the coffee you drink at work or at your local coffee house was supplied by Paramount Coffee. For more than 70 years, the company has been supplying restaurants, coffee houses, cafés, universities, hospitals, hotels and grocery stores with gourmet coffee under several brand names. Today, the company supplies 300 varieties for wholesale to more than 4,000 customers nationally.

"For too long, Paramount Coffee has been a secret treasure in Michigan," said **President Steve Morris**. "It's time to get our name out there. We want to start by having Paramount Coffee on the shelf of every grocery store in Michigan, and throughout the Midwest for that matter."

To do this, Paramount has recently begun an aggressive marketing program including the launch of a new logo and new retail packaging. Bright, bold colors in five shades were used to create the new packages. Each color signifies the type of coffee inside.

"The new logo and identity better reflects who we are as a company today and where we are headed in the future," says **Chairman and CEO Angelo Oricchio**.

Since its establishment, the company has undergone many changes to keep up with the evolving coffee business. The biggest change came in October of 2000 when the family-owned company was sold to its employees.

According to Oricchio, the transition has been pertinent to the company's continual success. He says, "Our employees know that the work they do makes a difference every day. They are not just working for someone else but contributing to the success of their company."

Part of Paramount's success is due to its streamlined operations. It has every phase of the coffee industry under one roof and has continually

expanded its products, services and facility. The team now operates in an 80,000 square foot facility that is equipped to handle every aspect of the coffee business, from start to finish.

When the coffee first arrives it is delivered to what is referred to as the "green bean room." From there, the beans are taken to one of the three roasters. Two large roasters are utilized for regular blends and have the capacity to roast 528 lbs every 10 minutes. The third roaster is used for gourmet blends. The coffee is then ground if necessary, and then individually packaged and boxed.

"In order to exceed our customers' expectations, we have to create the highest quality coffee," says Oricchio. To ensure the coffee has a consistent quality taste, cupping is performed daily in the facility's tasting room. Cupping, comparable to wine tasting, is a technique used to evaluate the flavor profile of a coffee by slurping, not swallowing. According to Oricchio,

the taste will vary drastically depending on the type of beans and how they were roasted. He adds, "Cupping is also a way for us to detect undesirable batches."

The facility is also equipped with a high-end service department. The employees in this area are experienced technicians and work around the clock to ensure that the customer's machines are working properly.

Another unique aspect to the company is the extensive customer training program that is provided to potential coffee house owners. The training is conducted on-site in the company's full-service Coffeehouse/Café. Paramount Coffee offers the most comprehensive espresso program in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana. According to Oricchio, it gives future coffee house owners an opportunity to learn how to use the equipment. In addition to the hands-on training, these customers are also provided start up consulting, educational seminars, marketing support and in-store training.

Paramount also supports the Lansing region by providing jobs and adding revenue to the local economy, as well as contributing to the community. Paramount employees are involved in several local charitable organizations and have created a fundraising program to help schools, churches, amateur sports teams and nonprofit organizations reach their financial goals.

Paramount Coffee's latest endeavor addressed fair trade coffee and had global and environmental issues at the forefront. The fair trade agreement is made between producers that at least a minimum price per pound will be paid for certain goods. The purchase of this coffee provides farmers and workers in less developed nations an opportunity to make a living wage.

"Although it costs us more, we believe in the fair trade program and are committed to helping coffee growers across the globe thrive," says Morris.

With its top notch team, outstanding customer training program and excellent product, there's no doubt that Paramount Coffee can achieve its goal to end its reign as the "best kept secret in Lansing."

Written by Tonya A. Hansen, Principal Shopping District Marketing Manager.

