

Minster Presses, Bluffton Slaw Cutters Stand the Test of Time

They don't make 'em like they used to... or do they?

At the Bluffton Slaw Cutter Co., simple, but effective kitchen appliances are still manufactured practically the same way they were when the company began nearly 90 years ago.

Founded in 1915 in Bluffton, Ohio, the Bluffton Slaw Cutter Co. produces a variety of hand-held graters, shredders and slicers. The company still maintains and utilizes much of its original and early machine tools and production equipment.

Except for a few added guards and safety devices, the Bluffton Slaw Cutter "factory" looks pretty much like it would have in the 1920s. Large belts



A ceiling-mounted line shaft provides the power for many of the machine tools at the Bluffton Slaw Cutter Company, which produces a variety of vegetable and fruit choppers, graters and slicers.



Bluffton Slaw Cutter owner/operator Tim King next to a Minster No. 5 OBI press, which was shipped in 1926. The press is still used in production today.

attached to a ceiling-mounted line shaft provide the power for a series of presses, benders and shears. The manufacturing system includes three Minster OBI presses -- a No. 2, No. 4 and No. 5.

The Minster Machine Company began manufacturing mechanical presses in 1926, the same year the No. 5 OBI was shipped to the Bluffton Slaw Cutter Co.

"I had a question about this press and I wasn't even sure The Minster Machine Company was still in business," said Tim King, who along with his parents own and operate the Bluffton Slaw Cutter Co. "I found a phone number and gave them a call. The first thing they wanted was the serial number, and when I told them, I don't think they believed me at first. The service people at Minster told me that the serial number is for one of the first presses they ever made."

Minster maintains complete drawings and service records on all of its equipment, and King was surprised to learn the Minster Service Department was able to provide him detailed information about the 78-year-old press.

The Bluffton Slaw Cutter Co. has seen different ownership over the years. The Kings acquired the company about 20 years ago from a group of investors, including a Bluffton College professor who operated the company as a “hands-on” business project for students of the college.

The Kings, who also operate an insurance business, run the Bluffton Slaw Cutter Co. as pretty much a sideline. The hand-held graters and slicers maintain a very niche market.

“It’s definitely a fun business,” King said. “We make 12 different styles of slaw cutters -- the same styles we’ve been making for 20 years.”



Three of the many varieties of products manufactured by the Bluffton Slaw Cutter Company of Bluffton, Ohio.



A Minster No. 2 OBI press was shipped to the Bluffton Slaw Cutter Company in 1928.

Most of the orders are for one or two slaw cutters at a time and come through the mail or over the internet.

“We don’t do any marketing to speak of,” King said, “but we do get a steady flow of letters inquiring about the products. The internet helps us out as well.”

The different styles of cutters range from \$5 to \$7, and an order form is available at www.blufftonslawcutter.com. Special pricing is also available for grouped sets.

The cutters are made from heavy gauge tin-plated steel, which is cut to size on a shearing machine. Most of the cutters are formed and punched on the company’s original dies. While one die does the punching, another die “hammers” the cutter, which sharpens the slicer. The Bluffton Slaw Cutters are famous for their ability to maintain their sharpness.

“We get letters all the time from people who say they’ve had a Bluffton Slaw Cutter for 50 years and it’s still working great,” King said. “A lot of older people want to order new ones if they have a granddaughter getting married.”

“Bluffton Slaw Cutters are just like Minster Presses,” King added. “They’re still available, and they still work great.”