

## SENSORY QUALITY PROGRAMS: A NEW OFFERING FOR FOOD MANUFACTURING SPECIALISTS TO CONSIDER

**ABOUT CLIF BAR BAKING COMPANY OF TWIN FALLS, LLC.** Clif Bar & Company is a leading maker of natural energy and nutrition foods. The company's products include Clif Bar, Clif Duos, Clif Thin Bars, Clif Nut Butter Bar, Clif Kid, Luna bars, and more. The husband and wife team of Gary Erickson and Kit Crawford created Clif Bar. They turned their passion for the outdoors and love of cooking into a multi-million dollar business. Clif Bar has 2 manufacturing facilities, one in Twin Falls, Idaho, and one in Indianapolis, Indiana. Recently Clif Bar was acquired by Mondelez International for \$2.9 billion.

**THE CHALLENGE.** The sensory team focuses primarily on consumer testing for new product introductions. Many larger manufacturing organizations have strong consumer insights programs, but find there is a gap in how to translate consumer insights into sensory quality grading programs at the factory level. That's because the type of data collected in consumer testing is subjective, but the type of data collected in sensory evaluations is objective. The action standards, food references, and training program can be difficult to merge.

Clif Bar had started that process by developing an industry-standard grading scale that aligned with corporate quality expectations. They also had sensory profiles developed for each of their products, as part of their new product launch portfolio. As part of their continuous improvement efforts, Clif Bar engaged the food processing specialists at TechHelp, a member of the MEP National Network™, to strengthen the factory sensory training and grading programs, and leverage them to support quality improvement initiatives.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** TechHelp conducted plant sensory training. This included an audience of internal quality staff, operators, and shift leaders. The training started with a general overview, including basic tastes, bitter screening, aroma/flavor training (for critical to quality and off/defect flavors), and objective texture scaling exercises. After building the foundational sensory skills in the team, TechHelp facilitated aroma/flavor and texture recognition/detection exercises. Proxy products were adulterated to elicit a specific quality defect. Participants were taught to identify (at low-intensity levels) the flavor or texture "off," grade it using Clif Bar's internal sensory grading rubric, and align it to action standards.

"I would say that TechHelp has been great to work with over the years. Whether we need training or a complex project, TechHelp has the people to assist us in meeting our objectives."

-Isaac Norstad, Director, Bakery FSQA

## RESULTS



12 created or retained jobs



\$1,000,000 in cost savings



\$15,000 in new investment

## CONTACT US



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