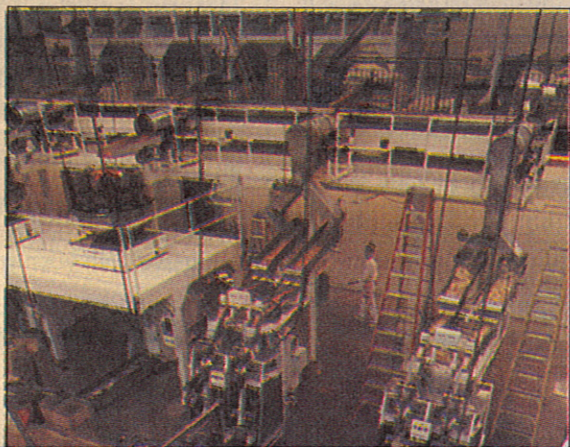


Dutch Treat

by Bruce Owen

*Here's how
Manitoba spuds
end up in the
windmill chip
boxes*



THEY STAND THERE like sentries, two stuffed arctic wolves guarding the inner sanctum. Except in this case they're protecting a few tonnes of potato chips.

The grey and white wolves, each captured forever in a menacing pose, belong to Vernon Aanenson, owner of Old Dutch Foods Limited. They're the first things you see when you enter the company's plant in Inkster Industrial Park.

He bought them from natives in the Northwest Territories, around Gods Lake, and had them mounted in Winnipeg.

"I didn't put smiles on them," he jokes.

One stands next to his office – an office the 76-year-old uses when he's not at the company headquarters in Minneapolis – and the other wolf, fangs exposed, stands next to the door that takes you to the heart of his business.

Your senses are immediately assaulted by the bright lighting and the dull rumble of machinery. And then, of course, there's the sweet pungent smell of potatoes – millions of them – in raw

Where does it all start?

FOR THE most part, it starts in the ground around Winkler and the Red River Valley. This is where Old Dutch gets 90 per cent of its potatoes.

On a daily basis, semi-trailer trucks drop off 55,000 pounds of potatoes each at the Old Dutch plant at 100 Bentall St. It's on these dark loading docks where the spuds are stored in nine giant bins until they're ready to be made into a chip. That moment comes when the bins are opened and a powerful, water-driven chute drives the potatoes up to the production area.

Dion says workers process 120,000 pounds of potatoes a day. That might sound like a lot, but because of the high water content, it takes about 3-1/2 pounds of raw potato to make a one pound serving of chips.

The raw potatoes travel up to the second floor at breakneck speed – a speed which doesn't damage the vegetable, but

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inspectors toss bruised or spotted aside.

Those potatoes that remain continue down the conveyor belt where they're soaked in water. They're then hurled into a spinning cage where centrifugal and sharp knives combine to slice



Old Dutch plant manager Marcel Dion inspects chips, left, while worker sorts potatoes, below.



This is where a potato chip tastes best. It's still warm and practically melts in your mouth. (You can duplicate this at home by placing chips in tin foil on a tray and heating until warm to the touch in your oven. Don't use a microwave - it just makes the chips soggy).

At this point, the good chips are separated from the bad chips. Chips which

A series of belts carry them to one of several small tumblers where they're flavored, either Bar-B-Q, Salt n' Vinegar, Ketchup, Bacon, Sour Cream n' Onion, Dill, Onion n' Garlic, Mexican Chili, or Sour Cream n' Cheddar.

From the seasoning tumblers, the chips are immediately packaged, boxed and moved to the massive storeroom