

Tofu factory profits despite scare

By RICHARD WIENS
Of the Emerald

A hepatitis scare can dampen a food-production business faster than anything else. But the Surata Soyfoods factory, 518 Olive St., rebounded from just such a catastrophe. Sales of a Chinese food called tofu, Surata's only product, are booming.

Tofu, also known as bean curd or soybean cake, is the pressed curds of soybean milk. First discovered by a Chinese prince, it has been the protein backbone of East Asians' diets for more than 2,000 years. Surata Soyfoods began making the cheese-like product in Eugene and selling it to health food stores and restaurants in March, 1977.

"Our business climbed gradually," says Benjamin Hills, part of a five-member cooperative that owns and operates the factory. By last December, sales of tofu had increased from the 400 pounds per week at the beginning, to 1,000 pounds weekly.

And then disaster pounced. Two workers at the tofu factory were found to have hepatitis. Hills immediately notified the Lane County Health Division and the Oregon Department of Agriculture, who in turn notified the press.

"Tofu factory has outbreak of hepatitis," screamed a Eugene Register-Guard headline. "Tofu lovers, beware," warned the Willamette Valley Observer.

The health division closed down Surata Soyfoods for two weeks in January and attempted, mostly without success, to recall all tofu shipped by the factory in December.

Although no cases of hepatitis were traced to the tofu, sales dropped by about 10 percent when the factory was allowed to reopen. Not a single health food store or restaurant canceled its account with the tofu manufacturers, but the bad publicity had an affect on wary consumers.

Fortunately for Surata time heals all and increases tofu appetites. Surata Soyfoods now supplies 22



Surata Soyfoods

stores and restaurants throughout Oregon, and last week sold 1,530 pounds of the cream-colored food. At the Oregon Country Fair in Veneta, a booth supplied by the factory sold 580 pounds of tofu, according to Pat Manuel, Surata's public relations person.

Tofu is usually sold in one-pound blocks, but at the Veneta fair it was prepared in many different ways. For breakfast, the booth sold scrambled tofu. "Tofuillas," fried tofu with green peppers, was served at lunchtime. For dinner, tofu in mixed vegetables was the hot item.

Manuel, a University nutrition major, says "people aren't aware of how important it is to get fresh tofu. The packaged tofu sold in grocery stores is imported from California and far from fresh."

"Tofu can be eaten raw if it is fresh enough," she says. It can also be served in salad dressings, sandwiches, soups, casseroles, vegetable and grain preparations and a host of other dishes.

"I just want fresh tofu in the community," Manuel adds. "Housewives are becoming aware that there shouldn't be as much meat in their family's diet. Mainly, they're switching to dairy products. I want them to know there's an alternative."

"Tofu is wonderful because it's a very cheap source of high quality protein. I use it every day, but then, I'm a hard-core tofu person."

So, apparently, is a growing number of other Oregonians. Surata Soyfoods is "pretty much making as much tofu as they can as fast as they can," says Manuel. The factory will soon purchase a huge pressure cooker to cook soybeans faster, and it plans to start producing other food items (Coming soon is tempeh, a fermented soy product said to taste like southern fried chicken).

Tofu's success in Eugene is due in part to an increase in various consumer types, says Hills.

"A lot of older people are catching on to it. It's a low cholesterol food that's even been shown to reduce fat deposits."

review

Pepper band pays tribute to Beatles

By MELODY WARD
Of the Emerald

It's been more than 10 years since the Beatles recorded Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band and filmed Yellow Submarine. Both the record and the movie stood out — Yellow Sub because it was their best movie, and the album because it was the first they recorded after they stopped touring in 1966.

Sgt. Pepper's cover showed a collage of stars pressed around a grave bearing the legend "Beatles." A subtle indication that things had somehow changed. Black-clad John, Paul, George and Ringo stood among the mourners, with the Pepper band, henceforth SPLHCB, standing in full parade regalia at the grave's head.

Two years later, Paul took the long and winding road to being an individual artist, and the Fab Four were no more.

Until this summer, that is. Some '70s superstars have dusted off the parade regalia, hired the Beatles' old producer (George Martin) and put together a musical alle-

gory (shades of the Sub) with a little help from friends like George Burns, Steve Martin and Alice Cooper — to name a few.

The BeeGees plus Peter Frampton have pulled it off with unexpected class, recreating for a while the magic and — ready cringing gear, die-hard cynics — joy that was in so much of Lennon, McCartney and Harrison's music. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band circa 1978 is an outstanding piece of entertainment and has come to the National Theater in Eugene.

The scenes with Steve Martin alone are worth the price of admission.

This is no ordinary (blah) musical. The story was written to fit many of the Beatles' best songs, rather than the other way 'round. The dialogue is music, woven together with short silent-film messages and narration by Mr. Kite (Burns). Sort of the ultimate video-disc, panoramis style.

The plot does have some elements in common with predecessor Submarine, but it is fresh compared with other summer

musical offerings.

Heartland, USA is the home of Billy Shears and three brothers (BeeGees) who together formed the second-generation SPLHCB. Heartland is serious about its musicians. Even moms and dads rock out.

Billy (Frampton) is in love with a wholesome young lass named Strawberry Fields. All is well until Our Boys receive word from Big Disco (BD) that they are superstar material. The theme is simple: big city equals corruption, and Heartland represents the pure of heart. (And the love of money is —.)

So the boys fall...it's a long, long way from the farm. BD shows 'em a good time, LA music biz style.

Meanwhile, the dastardly (ex-realtor) Mr. Mustard creeps into Heartland, steals Sgt. Pepper's magical instruments, which must

be suppressed to make the world free from decency, and vile vices proliferate in the formerly undeveloped village. Mustard works for FVP, who is plotting to take over the world, stamp out love and turn Strawberry into a mindless groupie, with the aid of a love-hating army manufactured by Dr. Maxwell (Martin) and trained by Father Sun (Cooper).

You'll have to see the movie to find out who FVP is. I guarantee a surprise worthy of the Rolling Stones.

In a movie crammed with superstars, Strawberry Fields is the unknown quantity. Not only is she the hero(ine), but she really can sing well. And unlike many female characters (some in this movie) she is neither bitch, femme fatale, nor doormat. Too bad she gets — oops.

The movie doesn't just ride on the music; the characters are good: deadpan timing with exciting choreography and psychedelic visual effects. Watch closely, because everything hinges on action and reaction. But then, how could musicians go wrong, playing a bunch of musicians? Earth, Wind and Fire plays itself, bringing the only song not produced by Martin.

When the combined forces of American Top-40 get behind a movie, including music mogul Don (cringe) Kirshner, you know it's going to be commercial. Maybe, but at least the movie retains the Beatles' spirit.

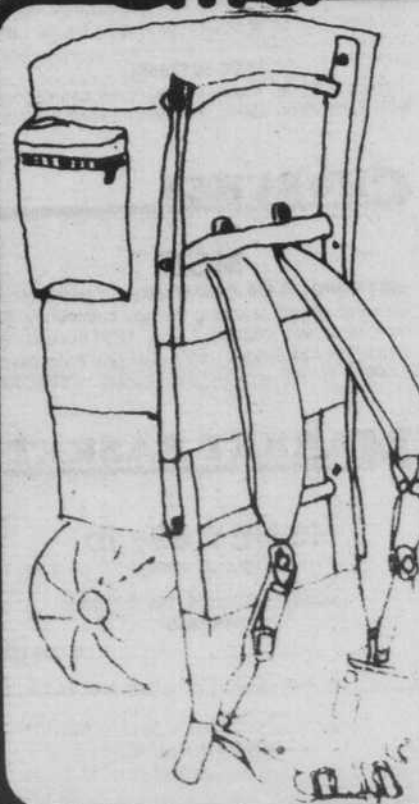
By the way, in spite of what happens to Strawberry, and even though Billy — oops. Just remember: home is where the heart is; "where you once belonged."

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