

CASE STUDY



Moo Thru Customer Profile

Every year, fourth-generation dairy farmer Ken Smith and his family treat ardent ice cream fans to more than 100 Moo Thru flavours made with milk from their 740 grass-fed, champion Holstein cows. Ken, his wife Pam and son Ben run the dairy farm, while daughter Taylor Gough makes and sells Moo Thru ice cream.

- Launched 2010
- 30 to 40% growth year over year
- 30,000 gallons of ice cream made by hand in 2019
- 5 to 7 production employees, 3 executives/managers
- Available exclusively in Virginia at two retail locations (Lake Anna, VA, Hillsboro, VA), 3 ice cream trucks (2 corporate, 1 franchisee)
- Franchise program debuted in April 2018, sales expected to increase 30% annually
- New 550% larger production facility increased production tenfold in 2020



Real Ice Cream from Real Dairy Farmers – Compliant from Cow to Cone

Moo Thru's ice cream will always be hand-crafted and slow-churned and until mid 2018, the entire team remained devoted to the equally old-school pens and paper they'd always used to run the business.

Yet, in April 2018, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration didn't give Moo Thru a choice – they had to replace their old-school tools with Mar-Kov's Vittles traceability and material requirement planning software to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Pens and paper simply couldn't provide the instant access to the detailed, real-time production and shipment data required to be FDA compliant. FSMA covers everything from preventive controls and standards to the traceability required for FDA-mandated and voluntary recalls.

Vigilant & Diligent to Prevent & Manage Recalls

"Vigilance, diligence and access to accurate information is the key to prevention and effective recalls," says Emily Julian, chief operating officer, Moo Thru. "Mar-Kov's Vittles gives us the data we need to provide customers, consumers and regulators with vital information about our products, from ingredients such as nuts and carrageenan to manufacturing and shipping details."

Traceability is a crucial FSMA component and ice cream makers like Moo Thru will never forget Blue Bell Creameries' 2015 listeria outbreak. Three people died, 8,000,000 gallons of ice cream were recalled, production was stopped at all plants and a third of Blue Bell's workforce (1,450 employees) was laid off. Blue Bell's reputation and business have yet to fully recover.

"Because our entire industry remembers what happened at Blue Bell, we rely on tools like Mar-Kov's Vittles to give us the transparency we need in the unlikely event of a recall," says Emily. "It means we recall only the affected products and that we do it quickly and accurately."

Transparency & Traceability

Transparency and traceability have always been a priority at Moo Thru, but the more ice cream they make, ship and sell, the more accurately and precisely data must be tracked in real time. Thanks to Mar-Kov's Vittles, Moo Thru is confident



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Challenge

- Achieve FDA Food Safety Modernization Act Compliance by September 2018

Solution

- Mar-Kov's Vittles traceability and material requirement planning software

Results

- FDA FSMA compliant
- Vittles is scalable as Moo Thru grows
- Full traceability and transparency with accurate, precise, real-time data
- Automated costing and billing boosts profitability, saves time



they're compliant from cow to cone as mandated by the FDA's FSMA. That's vital as Moo Thru's expansion continues with its franchise program and the 2020 move to the new, 2,200 sq. ft. plant.

"Inspectors and HACCP auditors can drop in without notice whenever they want – with Vittles we're always ready – that gives us peace of mind, because there are no do-overs with regulators or consumers," says Emily.

Vittles puts automated, electronic batch records, bar-coded inventory and recipes at employees' fingertips. Access to that accurate, real-time data helps ensure mock recall compliance and the automated testing of batch record/data. It also supports the cross-referencing and retrieval of receiving, production and shipping records to give Moo Thru and regulators everything they could possibly need.

Control Costs & Manage Margins

The data and reports available through Vittles help Moo Thru control costs and manage the margins to better support its expansion and growth. Twice a year for close to a decade, Emily and Taylor Gough, production manager, have dreaded the two tedious days they devoted to crunching the numbers and digging through the piles of paper heaped on the floor. Consistently and accurately developing profitable wholesale and retail prices was a challenge. They know they made mistakes, but without the data, they couldn't know the frequency, magnitude or impact of those errors.

"Push a button and Vittles delivers these incredible reports that track costs, pricing and selling patterns," says Emily.

“We love Vittles’ reports because they help us make money”

- Emily Julian, Chief Operating Officer, Moo Thru

Of course, milk is the main ingredient but with 100+ flavours that vary season to season, automated inventory control and tracking is a bonus. To date, about half of the 100 recipes reside in Vittles with the other 50 waiting to be pulled from the filing cabinets and keyed into Vittles.

Not surprisingly, Moo Thru manually invoices customers, but starting in 2020, the integration of Vittles and QuickBooks will save Emily and Taylor up to 2.5 hours per billing cycle. Automated billing gives them an extra couple of hours to devote to more value-added tasks and ensures billing is done accurately and on time every time.



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Moo Thru Real Ice Cream



“The more we grow, the more we’ll appreciate the automated billing,” says Emily.

Vittles’ Extraordinary Cost-Benefit Ratio

In 2017, Emily turned to Software Advice for traceability and material requirement planning software recommendations and received 100+ suggestions. After more than 40 demos, she knew exactly what she needed and valued enough to pay for it - a scalable, cloud- and subscription-based software for batch processors. She liked the fact Moo Thru could grow into Vittles and commit to capabilities such as traceability, recall, inventory, costing and billing at their own pace.

“Mar-Kov’s Vittles cost-benefit ratio is extraordinary – it is exactly what we needed” - Emily Julian, Chief Operating Officer, Moo Thru

“I tested the most expensive platforms with countless checklists and bells and whistles and learned we don’t want or need something that complex and sophisticated,” says Emily. “Why commit to something we can’t afford knowing we’ll use just a fraction of it?!”

Vittles and its implementation, training and support have exceeded Moo Thru’s expectations. With just three executives and five to seven production employees, this small team has to manage the business and make ice cream. User-friendly and intuitive, Vittles makes sense to people in batch processing because it was developed by food industry veterans. Young, technology-savvy Moo Thru employees learned how to use Vittles in a few hours, despite the fact English is their second language.

Living the Dream with Vittles

Back in 2010, farmer Ken Smith wanted friends and neighbors to appreciate the families, cattle and farms that were the source of the milk, and ice creams they loved. To make that dream a reality – he created Moo Thru to offer fresh milk in glass bottles and hand-crafted, slow-churned ice cream!

“Vittles is the best, the cheapest and you’d have to be stupid not to get it – we love Vittles!” - Emily Julian, Chief Operating Officer, Moo Thru

Ken, his wife Pam, son Ben and daughter Taylor are now living that dream and with a little help from Mar-Kov’s Vittles, Moo Thru is moving forward as a beloved milk and ice cream maker that’s also FDA/FSMA compliant.

