

The Milkweed



Dairy's best information and insights

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McDonald's Breaded Mozzarella Sticks: Adulterated & Misbranded

by Pete Hardin

See page 3 for more details. Dairy farmers' promotion dollars developed this adulterated & misbranded crap!

McDonald's – the nation's biggest fast-food chain – is violating federal law by selling adulterated, misbranded “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks.”

A laboratory test commissioned by *The Milkweed* reveals presence of large amounts of plant-based starch in McDonald's “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks.” Starch content from this analysis was 3.76%. Starch is not a legal ingredient or additive in cheese products labeled “Mozzarella,” according to standards of identity established by the United States' Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Under FDA rules, consumer products marketed and sold using the name of a cheese bearing an FDA standard of identity may not deviate from the list of approved ingredients. Starch is NOT an approved ingredient for any of the four Mozzarella varieties listed in FDA's standards of identity: Mozzarella, low-moisture Mozzarella, part-skim Mozzarella, and low-moisture part-skim Mozzarella.

Starch is cheap and holds water!

Why would McDonald's allow plant starch in the “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks?” For food processors and marketers, plant starch products such as those derived from potatoes, corn and peas are miraculous, money-making fillers. Starches are far cheaper, per unit, than cheese. But the real bonus to food processors and marketers is starch's moisture-holding capacity. Starch may hold up to ten times its own weight in water. Thus, by simply adding one unit (by weight) of starch to a batch of food being processed means that up to ten units (by weight) of extra water may also be added to the mix ... and the resulting product will maintain its overall general consistency.

McDonald's has initially rolled out “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks” in Wisconsin, as one test market.

Plans are to expand sales of that item nationwide in coming months, according to statements by one of McDonald's dairy industry partners. Retail price for “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks” is generally \$2.39 (plus sales tax) per 2.3-oz. serving. In some instances, McDonald's also offers “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks” as a side item with Extra Value Meals for \$1 per serving.

Biting into one of McDonald's “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks” is the first indication that the product is cheap. The breading material surrounding the so-called “Mozzarella” core is unduly liberal. The October 2015 issue of *The Milkweed* carried an article titled, “McDonald's ‘Breaded Mozzarella Sticks’ Barely 50% Cheese.” That article analyzed the approximate weight ratios of the cheese portion (50.8%) and the breading (49.2%). That excessive breading “dumbs-down” the product's integrity. If McDonald's added any more breading to that product, the “stuff” might have been called, “Baked Breading with Mozzarella.”

Desperate to boost sagging fortunes

Selling adulterated, misbranded “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks” seems contradictory to McDonald's recent emphasis on improved menu offerings.

In recent years, McDonald's U.S. sales volume and stock prices have tumbled. McDonald's has closed hundreds of stores, a downsizing due to diminished sales at some locations. Aggressive competitors such as Panera Bread and Subway have sliced and diced McDonald's sales volumes. Those competitors (and others) are gaining sales through products perceived as healthier and more nutritious, compared to had become regarded as McDonald's “same-old, same-old” fast food fare. As part of McDonald's recent menu make-over, in 2011 the company crafted a “Commitments to Offer Improved Nutrition Choices.” Menu items added since then include: “Egg White Delight McMuffin”®, the Premium McWrap, a side salad offered as an alternative to French fries in the so-called “Extra Value Meals,” and offering water, milk or juice as the beverage



Laboratory tests reveal the presence of an illegal ingredient in McDonald's “Breaded Mozzarella Sticks” – starch (3.76%) by weight. This product is both adulterated and mis-branded.

included with kids' “Happy Meals.”

An on-line document posted by McDonald's reflects the corporate-wide thrust for improved nutrition and image:

“In September 2013, McDonald's Corporation partnered with the Clinton Foundation and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to announce a global commitment that includes McDonald's top 20 markets. Through that commitment, we will use our size and scale to help educate, empower and encourage our customers to make informed, nutrition minded choices by the year 2020.”

Sorry, but McDonald's customers cannot make “... informed, nutrition-minded choices ...” if the

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2016 Milk & Commodity Prices? Pay Attention to California!

by Pete Hardin

The evolving consensus of “experts” is that 2016 will be another difficult year for farm milk prices. Betting on 2016's Class III (cheese milk) futures plugs those values, at best, in the \$16.00/cwt. range. Butter futures at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange for the second half of 2016 go no higher than the \$1.90/lb. range. (What a money-maker that level of second-half 2016 butter futures should be for those with upside positions!)

Key California Dairy Trends October 2015

Milk Production	-5.5% to -6.1%**
Milk Per Cow:	-4.8%*
Total Cheese:	-5.0%*
Mozzarella:	-6.6%*
Cheddar:	-15.7%*
Butter:	-9.0%*
Nonfat Dry Milk:	-3.9%*

Surely, the “experts” will project tough milk prices for 2016 ... just like most of them did for 2014. (Note: In early 2014, Class III milk price projections for that year by the prestigious Dr. Robert Cropp, University of Wisconsin dairy economist *emeritus*, missed the mark by over \$6.00/cwt.

At face value, these standard dairy price predictors are depressing for dairy farmers who've struggled through 2015's declining milk prices.

The Milkweed cautiously advises dairy farmers (and everybody else in the industry) to wait. Don't buy into that conventional wisdom until we have a better handle on farm milk production and dairy commodity output trends in California, the nation's biggest dairy state. Several months ago, *The Milkweed* projected that California's farm milk output would be double-digit down by the end of 2015 (comparing same-month, year-ago figures). The way California's milk production is dropping lately, that seemingly wild projection by *The Milkweed* could be fairly close to the mark by December.

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