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## Ellison rolling out new dough



Photo by Deb Todd

Chad Fisher works with a batch of chocolate chip cookie dough at Ellison Bakery.

By Deb Todd  
*For Fort Wayne Newspapers*

Even Cookie Monster would find it impossible to keep up with the production lines at Ellison Bakery. The Fort Wayne-based company produces approximately 150,000 dozen cookies per day, resulting in an annual output of 520,000,000.

Long known for its association with Archway Cookies, Ellison recently introduced a new line of branded cookies marketed under its own name.

MJ Sparks, national retail sales manager, said the process began when Archway filed bankruptcy in late 2008. Ellison was the first Archway franchisee circa 1950. In 1997, Ellison sold the franchise back to Archway Corporate and initiated a long term contract baking agreement which prevented Ellison from producing any other product for retail sales, Sparks said.

Archway's bankruptcy freed Ellison from the

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Photo by Deb Todd

Kitty Robart, foreground, a 43-year Ellison Bakery employee, and co-workers prepare individually wrapped cookies for institutional use.

## Ellison

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constraints of the contract, enabling the company to develop and produce a line of cookies using new and improved formulas and ingredients.

Twelve new cookies are debuting, including traditional favorites such as oatmeal, oatmeal raisin, chocolate chip, sugar and molasses. Raspberry- and strawberry-filled cookies also promise to be popular.

"We've added some specialty cookies that include Rocky Road, Apple and Raisin, Windmill, Frosty Lemon and Coconut Macaroon," Sparks said.

Ellison lost 15 percent of its business following Archway's closing, said Todd Wallin, vice president and general manager, but diversification initiated in the 1980s enabled the company to

absorb the loss.

"In the early 80's Ellison started baking and selling products into the ice cream industry," Wallin said. "We bake cookies that are used to make chocolate chip cookie ice cream sandwiches. We also bake cookies and crush them up to be used as toppings for ice cream bars or as inclusions"—in packaged ice cream and candy, for example.

Ellison also produces individually wrapped cookies sold to institutional food services that supply schools, hospitals and nursing homes. Visitors to Fort Wayne International Airport enjoy cookies volunteers give to arriving passengers.

An expansion completed in 2008 boosted warehouse space, added production capability and introduced new equipment that enhanced manufacturing and distribution. Two production lines

run continuously, with a third line planned.

"The new retail line will require more capacity," Wallin said. He estimates the cost for a new oven, conveyer, and mixer to be \$1.25 million, potentially requiring 15 new employees. Completion of the line is anticipated within nine months.

Both Wallin and Sparks appreciate the family-friendly atmosphere of the business established in 1945 in founder Donald Ellis's garage.

"The family environment, the genuine concern for each employee ... make Ellison a great place to work," Sparks said. "Ellison has proved that good, solid principles in business and in relationships will bring stability even in hard times."

Ellison Bakery is located at 4108 Ferguson Road. For more information, visit [www.ebakery.com](http://www.ebakery.com) or call 747-6136.