

## Sisters Fruit Co./ Summit Foods

Crisp, juicy apples. We nearly take them for granted in the orchard-rich Pacific Northwest. But for Mark Smith, the fruit offered a ripe opportunity for innovation. Already the founder of a successful industrial fruit processing company, Smith knew there had to be a better way to preserve apples than the oil-fried chips or pulpy dehydrated nuggets found on retailers' shelves. His "aha" moment came in 2013 – a unique drying process that maintains quality and taste –and Sisters Fruit Co. was born.

Named for his daughters, Hannah and Heidi, who are enthusiastic marketers of their product, the company's apple chip business posed another challenge, however. Smith's successful Summit Foods business was already outgrowing a second plant site acquired just five years earlier.

Fortunately, the company didn't have to look far for its third site.

In January 2014, Summit Foods moved into a 31,000-square-foot former

water bottling site on B Street in Forest Grove.

Given that land costs can be at a premium in the Portland metro area, the company was thrilled to find a reasonably priced, compatible building, says Jeff Schultz, Summit's Technical Director. Additionally, city staff was welcoming and supportive. With some renovation, the site now houses Sisters Fruit as well as additional Summit Foods production facilities, employing about 10 (plus or minus, depending on the season).

Besides the advantage of proximity to Summit's other two plants, the Forest Grove location

offered several other benefits. Water and power are essential components to fruit processing, so the city's pristine water supply and reliable electrical network are major bonuses, Schultz says. Plus, the city's water and electricity rates are among the lowest in the area.

As a frequent shipper, Summit has found the city's transportation infrastructure more than adequate. "The streets are easy to navigate and the truckers have no problems finding us," says Shultz. "Public transportation access in Forest Grove is also a huge plus for our employees. The bus schedule and stop locations are perfect for our plant location."

Given the long legacy of agricultural processing in the area, the company sees itself as a "new wave" of ag processors setting up shop in Forest Grove and the surrounding area, Schultz says, and to be among a growing number of environmentally minded, community-oriented businesses locating here.



*A place where businesses and families thrive.*



### At a glance

**Sisters Fruit Co. is the first retail brand for Summit Foods, an 18-year-old Washington County fruit processor with additional plants in North Plains and Cornelius. Summit was established when food scientist Mark Smith developed a proprietary drying process that stabilizes and enhances fruit for the baking industry. Nearly two decades later, the company now supplies bakeries and snack food manufacturers nationwide with its uniquely processed fruits and berries.**

**Through the new Sisters Fruit brand, the company now also produces bags of crisp Red Delicious and cinnamon apple chips that are fat-and preservative-free. In the first 12 months of sales, the product has expanded into nearly two dozen stores, including New Seasons markets and other gourmet retailers in the Portland metro area. (Orders are also taken through the Sisters Fruit website.)**

**In addition to the Summit Foods/Sisters Fruit primary products, both companies provide raw material for a third Smith endeavor – Summit Natural Energy – which converts the plants' waste fruit juice (and ag waste from other sources) into ethanol. "Thunderbolt" fuel is sold to local race car enthusiasts.**

### SISTERS FRUIT CO./ SUMMIT FOODS

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