WISCONSIN MEAT INDUSTRY HALL OF FAME

2001

Arthur Chermak
Art Chermak grew up working after school in his father Emil's butcher shop in Manitowoc, helping to make and deliver Cher-Make sausage products. After serving in World War II, Chermak joined the family business, expanding the operation and opening a new Cher-Make Sausage Company plant at its present location on Calumet Avenue.

Following his father's death in 1954, Chermak took over management of the plant. In 1968 Cher-Make was approved as a USDA-certified processing facility, which allowed the company to sell its products outside of Wisconsin. This allowed Cher-Make to begin working with some of the largest mail-order food companies in the country. The company enjoys a reputation throughout its supplier network for testing and fine-tuning equipment at its facility, along with providing a safe and modern workplace for its employees.

Chermak has served on the boards of the National Independent Meat Packers Association and the American Meat Institute. Working with other Wisconsin sausage-makers through the Lakeshore Sausage Manufacturers Association, Chermak was instrumental in establishing the current USDA regulations for semi-dry sausage. These regulations allow unrefrigerated summer sausage to be merchandised and sold. The revised rules have allowed many gourmet gift packers and sausage processors to expand their markets by selling outside of traditional distribution channels -- through mail order, mall kiosks, fund-raising organizations and mass merchandisers.

Chermak served on the board of directors of the Green Bay Packers for 15 years, and was a founder and board member of the Manitowoc County Bank, now operated by Firstar Bank. He has been involved in a number of civic fund-raising efforts in Manitowoc, including drives for the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, Capital Civic Centre, and Silver Lake College.

Cher-Make has been the official hot dog at Lambeau Field for more than a decade, and the company has received numerous Seal of Excellence awards at the Wisconsin State Fair for its products. The Cher-Make Sausage Company remains under family ownership, with Art Chermak serving as chief executive officer and his son and nephews managing the company. Cher-Make today employs about 100 people.

Chermak and his wife, Alice, have four children, Jim, Tom, Chris and Ann. The Chermaks currently spend their time between Manitowoc, Wis.; Scottsdale, Ariz.; and Egg Harbor, Wis.