

Remembering Don F. Splittstoesser

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by John Zakour

GENEVA, NY: Cornell University emeritus professor Don F. Splittstoesser, 74, 1 Highland Ave, Geneva, died on Sunday, December 23, in Geneva General Hospital after a brief illness. Splittstoesser was internationally recognized as an authority on food microbiology. His research expertise was on bacteria and other microorganisms that cause food-borne diseases of humans. He worked in the department of food science and technology at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, in Geneva, NY.

"Don's expertise was invaluable to processors of fruit and vegetable products, including beverages," said Station director Jim Hunter. "His work enabled the industry to produce products free of spoilage organisms and others that cause intestinal illnesses."



Dr. Don splittstoesser

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Randy Worobo, who succeeded Splittstoesser as the Experiment Station's food microbiologist, said, "Don was world renowned for his expertise and contribution to the field of mycology as well as the first person to identify *Alicyclobacillus* as a spoilage bacterium in fruit beverages. He was the editor for several editions of the food microbiology 'bible'-*Compendium of Methods for the Microbiological*

Examination of Foods."

"Splitts was one of those unique scientists who was able to bridge laboratory work with practical application of industrial problems. His door was always open," said long time co-worker, professor emeritus Don Downing.

During his career, Splittstoesser wrote approximately 200 scientific and technical papers. He made nearly that many presentations nationally and internationally at industry meetings and training programs, and to professional organizations- wherever the topic was pathogens and spoilage microorganisms associated with fruit and vegetable products.

Splittstoesser was born in Tomah, Wisconsin on August 17, 1927. He received a B.S. in agriculture, a M.S. in bacteriology, and a Ph.D. in microbiology and biochemistry, all from the University of Wisconsin. After a two-year stint as a first lieutenant in the Army Medical Service Corps where he was chief of a serology branch, Splittstoesser came to Cornell as an assistant professor in 1958. He became an associate professor in 1964 and a full professor in 1969. He served as chairman of the food science and technology department in Geneva from 1982 until 1989, and was named professor emeritus in 1995.

Splittstoesser was a member of many professional organizations, including: Sigma Xi, the American Society for Microbiology, the Institute of Food Technologists, American Society for Enology and Viticulture, and the International Association of Milk and Food Sanitarians. He also held many offices and chaired many committees for the American Society of Microbiology, Central New York Branch, including secretary-treasurer from 1961-1964, president in 1966, and councilor in 1974-1975. He was chairman of the Institute of Food Technologists, Western NY Section, in 1970, chairman of the Microbiology Division in 1978-1979, and served on many panels and committees.

Splittstoesser received numerous honors throughout his career. He was named a Fellow of the Institute of Food Technologists in 1984. The American Society of Enology and Viticulture, Eastern Section gave him their Outstanding Achievement Award in 1991, and he won the William V. Hickey Award from the NYS Association of Milk and Food Sanitarians in 1994.

In addition to his activities at the Station, Splittstoesser was an active member of the community. He was treasurer of Finger Lakes Forum, and before that, on the board of the International Torch Association. He was a member of the City of Geneva's Zoning Board of Appeals, serving as its chairman for many years. He

was formerly on the board of the Family Counseling Service and involved with the American Field Service. He also was an active member of the Geneva Country Club and the Seneca Yacht Club.

Spittstoesser is survived by his wife, Clara; a sister, Ruth Harley Erbs; a brother-in-law, who lives in Wisconsin, Arthur (Shirley) Quinnell; one niece and five nephews.

There were no calling hours or service. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the charity of one's choice.

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