

Made in NYC Company of the Month



Carry Hot 511 West 33rd Street New York, NY 10001 www.carryhot.com



Carry Hot manufactures what could be arguably the most important product to a New Yorker— a thermal delivery bag that ensures your pizza, pad thai, empanada, bao bun, gyro, or meatball sub arrives at your home hot and fresh just like it left the kitchen. Carry Hot is currently the largest manufacturer of food transporters in the world and the only one in New York City. The bags are crafted in an unassuming building on West 33rd St, directly adjacent to Related Developments Hudson Yards megaproject.

Owned by Sanford Plotkin, Carry Hot is a product of over 75 years of manufacturing experience. The business was born from Avon Belt and Trimming Co, founded by Mr. Plotkin’s father in 1932. Avon made parachute straps as a strategic supplier during World War II. During the 50's and 60's Avon was a leading supplier of buckles, buttons, and belts primarily for the dress trade. By the late 70's Avon employed 150 skilled workers and acquired 511 West 33rd Street in 1983 where Avon built a state of the art manufacturing, design, and distribution facility. In the 1980’s business declined due to the flood of imports from the east, and the company eventually atrophied. The space it owned was then rented to other small businesses while Mr. Plotkin searched to identify the next incarnation of Avon.

The idea for Carry Hot came to Mr. Plotkin after he ordered a pizza one day and it arrived cold. “That’s when I had the eureka about using the equipment I had, the materials I had, the resources I had or had access to and the labor that was still here in New York City to make this product. In a word, we reinvented ourselves, and truth be told were still reinventing. It’s a process that doesn’t stop.” When touring the factory Sanford pointed out that several of the machines still in use are from the belt manufacturing days.

The Carry Hot business model is a unique one. Carry Hot imports about 30% of the bags sold from China, and makes the other 70% locally in Manhattan. The difference between the imported product and the Made in NYC product is that the import is an entry level transporter. It utilizes the same design as domestic bags, but they're not as durable. American made bags last forever, "They're like old Buicks." Says Plotkin, "They are the best bags made in the world, not just the United States. It's a product that New York can be proud of."

The Carry Hot manufacturing process is unique in that each bag is made of multiple component parts which allows Carry Hot to produce a large selection of sizes and shapes (92 to be exact, with a range of 15 colors) without needing to source extra material. This component interchange has been a huge asset to the success of the business and allows Carry Hot to serve a range of clients and their needs.

"No question about it, the heart and soul of the product is the care with which the components are assembled. The people who are here take enormous pride in what they do." Says Plotkin. "All employees are cross-trained to work in all stations. We have a dynamic workforce." This allows Carry Hot to execute custom orders with little to no lead time, something that outside competitors can't come close to offering.

When asked "why New York City?" the answer is simple, says Mr. Plotkin. "We are not located here to be close to the market, we are here because this is the market!" The proximity to his customers and the large pool of skilled labor make New York City the right place for Carry Hot. However, Mr. Plotkin does acknowledge that being in NYC is a two edged sword. Excessive regulation has been a burden at times to the business, but not enough to dissuade him from staying. Another challenge that Mr. Plotkin faces is sourcing material. "Finding new customers is a walk in the park compared to finding new resources and materials." Mr. Plotkin says suppliers of fabric, component parts, and tool and die makers have more or less left New York City, making it difficult to source material on short notice.

Constantly investing in equipment and capital improvements, Mr. Plotkin has made it a priority to keep his business as efficient as possible. The building has been re-lamped with CFL lights and the boiler replaced with a more efficient one that is able to monitor water usage. "Any green advantage we can find, we use." Says Mr. Plotkin.

So the next time you order pizza, take a look at the bag your delivery man pulls the box from and chances are you will see the flaming Carry Hot label, staring back up at you. Proudly, Made in NYC.

