

FROZEN AND REFRIGERATED PRODUCT NEWS

Frozen FOODAGE

CATEGORY ANALYSIS AND CONSUMER TRENDS FOR RETAIL

Brand SOLUTIONS AGE

Fish Wrap

Stretch shrink is a splashing success at Beaver Street Fisheries.

Beaver Street Fisheries supplies a wide range of finfish and shellfish from around the world to restaurants, wholesalers, specialty retailers and supermarkets. The company's emphasis on value and quality has led to tremendous growth from its beginning in 1950 as a small, retail fresh fish store on West Beaver Street in Jacksonville, Fla. Those same values have also assured some very exacting standards in their packaging processes. To guarantee the quality and hygiene of its frozen seafood products, in addition to enhancing their presentation on the display shelves, Beaver Street Fisheries opted for high performance stretch shrink packaging equipment from Ossid. After several years' experience, the choice has proven to be wise and profitable. The system involves using stretch shrink film for overwrapping trayed fish and seafood in attractive packages.

At the two-story, 32,000-square-foot facility in Jacksonville, case-ready seafood products account for a large portion of the fill-to-order system for clients. Since all 40 SKUs of case-ready seafood (otherwise called refresh counter packs) require overwrapping, it is an especially important aspect of protective packaging.

"Overwrapping provides the same level of quality assurance and protection for every product on each pallet load, guaranteeing that packaging is secure over long distances and everything arrives in optimum condition," says Roger Denmark, production supervisor at Beaver Street Fisheries. "Our customers receive the product frozen for thawing at their fish counter, so we use oxygen-permeable film that won't create an anaerobic environment, while providing a leak-resistant, abuse-resistant package for extended shelf life."

Case-Ready Challenge

For several years, Beaver Street had been using two wrapping machines that used pin perforations to remove the excess air from the packages. Once the company began producing case-ready seafood, it became evident that the water glaze on the thawing seafood packages leaked significantly. This wasn't an issue for seafood that was kept frozen after delivery, but once Beaver Street started to produce case-ready seafood, the perforation process proved to be unacceptable.

In 2001, the company approached Ossid, a leading food packaging innovator, to help improve product quality and packaging processes. They made the decision to purchase two Ossid 500E Stretch Shrink Wrapper machines and use them exclusively for all case-ready seafood products.

"We learned of Ossid Corporation when one of our customers approached us. They were already overwrapping their case-ready poultry line with Ossid equipment because it produced a leak-resistant finished product. They asked us to use an Ossid stretch shrink machine for their seafood as well. That is when we learned about Ossid's recent innovations in

packaging—something the meat and poultry industry has been taking advantage of for years,” says Denmark. The end result was less dripping and less odor, giving an enhanced overall presentation at the retail counter, significantly increasing consumer appeal.

Beaver Street Fisheries’ production runs in an uninterrupted “straight line” process flow. All product arrives in bulk in polybags and eventually ends up case-ready in one of three trays (10-oz., 12-oz., 2-lb. or family packs of four 6-oz. fillets). For example, a family pack begins with product manually placed into a tray as it passes each workstation. Once a tray is filled, the fish fillets are fashioned before entering the auto conveyor to an Ossid 500E stretch shrink index machine.



As a tray enters the stretch shrink machine, flat surface film goes through a pair of gripper chains stretching the film around the tray. The film passes through a set of center seal rolls forming the film into a tube. This allows the package to continue to lay flat on the belted surface even as a center seal is produced. As the product continues through the continuous motion machine, a vacuum system removes excess air just prior to the end seal being produced. A set of telescoping side belts maintains control of the pack as the vacuum carries it along the conveyor. This eliminates tray slippage that is common to systems without side belts.

After sealing the package continues into an end-seal shrink unit. Patented servo driven heaters preshrink the film allowing the end-seal to be placed below the lip of the tray, creating an attractive package and eliminating unsightly loose or twisted end wrap.

“We run a ten-hour shift four days a week and produce roughly 30,000 trays per day or 3,750 total cases off two lines per day,” says Denmark. Most of the downtime is due to “fish catch,” when a fin becomes lodged in a machine part. Film changeovers only take about three minutes and Denmark says that the Ossid machine is “one of the best, most reliable machines I have worked on in my 13 years at Beaver Street. We did look at other equipment manufacturers, and some made a nice looking package, but the pin perforations were always a concern. Our customers are consistently satisfied with the performance of the Ossid packaging.”

Another important factor for Beaver Street is that all machinery and materials that will come in contact with food must be

designed and constructed so they can be cleaned each time they are used. The Ossid machines really stand up to the daily cleaning required at food facilities. Beaver Street has a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Plan (HACCP) to determine food safety hazards and to identify the preventive measures that the processor can apply to control those hazards. According to Denmark, the other machines do not react as well as the Ossid machines to the moisture that gets into components.

The only downtime Beaver Street experienced with the Ossid wrappers was the inevitable learning curve that occurs with any new machine. Ossid offers a training program for all new equipment, which Denmark and his colleagues took advantage of

and learned basic threading, loading and programming, tear down on heads and gripper belts, and review of the service schedule. The most challenging part of the process for Beaver Street was getting the initial capital for the purchase of the two machines.

“Management is very happy with the immediate ROI the Ossid delivers in end of day production. We increased productivity by dramatically reducing rejects,” says Denmark. Beaver Street Fisheries recently recommended Ossid to one of its vendors. “We are thriving by staying on the leading competitive edge, and striving to do things right. Following regulations produces a quality product now and in the future,” says Denmark. “Ossid is the same way, the products are quality at a competitive price.” ■

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