

NEWS/BUSINESS

FoodTools offers innovative slicing solutions, cutting edge technology for cheese industry

By Rena Archwamety

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — FoodTools, a leading global provider of food portioning equipment, started in 1983 with a novel idea for cutting cheesecake. An engineer and a baker developed a method to divide cheesecake into equal sections while inserting a piece of waxed paper between each slice.

From this innovation, the company grew, engineering and distributing portioning machines for bakery, cheese and other food industries across the United States and around the world. FoodTools incorporates the latest technology in machines designed for high-production, high-speed processing lines, but also provides manual and compact machines for small shops.

“The last couple of years, there has been growing demand for very high production, almost custom in-line solutions for all categories,” says Chris Clemens, FoodTools marketing. “Food production plants are increasing production, trying to streamline and get rid of bottlenecks.”

FoodTools lately has been creating solutions for hard cheeses for some of its customers, including a unique project that allowed one customer to divide a wheel of aged Gouda into not only wedges but also horizontal layers in a multi-step process.

This particular solution incorporates three FoodTools machines. The 5-CWS scores the hard rind of the cheese wheel with a saw as the cheese sits on a rotating table. The scored wheel then is placed on the 5-HA, which slices the cheese in horizontal layers with either wires or custom-made blades. Finally, the horizontally-sliced wheel is placed on the 5-AF, where a portioning wire is lowered down through the wheel and cuts it into wedges for distribution.

“Cheesemakers might want to do something but think there is no solution out there. This was an interesting request we had, and now we have a new solution,” Clemens says. “I don’t think there’s any approach we can’t do, just what we haven’t done yet. Whatever they can think of, come to our engineering team, and we will work with them.”

Along with the demand for high-production equipment FoodTools has been tracking over the past several years, the company also has seen demand for upgraded sanitation, which is a driving factor for updating and changing design. Companies also seek to use FoodTools machines to help reduce waste and create consistent or specialized product sizes.

“We were just at the Pizza Expo, and a lot of people in that industry want to reduce the size of a cheese

block to be shredded and put on pizza,” Clemens says. “We also offer a tabletop machine to slice Mozzarella.”

On the other end from tabletop slicers are high-end, top-of-the-line production machines that incorporate some of the latest technologies from FoodTools. For example, the CS-3SA is designed to slice cheese into wedges, squares or rectangles, operating at 120 products per hour for cheese wheels and 240 products per hour for cheese blocks. It is ideal for producers who need to cut and slice several types of cheese into different configurations of portions.

“This is a premier machine that has a lot of our newest technology. Some of our higher-end customers are using that machine,” Clemens says. “It has a light curtain for safety, which opens up the machine and improves efficiency and sanitation, with less moving parts. When we have a new technology, we put it in this machine.”

Clemens adds that the company also has worked with smaller customers who have grown and evolved from needing manual machines to semiautomatic and fully-automatic equipment.

“We continue growing with someone, from small production tools to in-line categories,” he says. “We’re honored to be able to supply these machines, and we stand behind them. If there’s anything that needs to be changed or updated, we want to be in the field helping our customers.” CMN

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