



OODLES OF NOODLES

▲ Spiralized noodles from beets made by the Turatti Streamer. Photo: Turatti

EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS DELIVER NEW MACHINES FOR NEW KINDS OF CUTS

By **Kathy Gibbons**
Contributing Writer

Another year, more innovations. As spiralized and other types of vegetable noodles become increasingly popular among consumers and chefs who see them as a healthy and gluten-free substitute for pasta — Whole Foods listed pasta alternatives like these as one of the eight biggest food trends for 2017 — equipment to make them aims to keep pace.

Turatti Group launched its spiralizers on the U.S. market when it introduced its Model Streamer at the United Fresh Produce Association Expo in 2016.

"We had a major customer in the frozen business who decided to launch vegetable noodles — mostly zucchini and carrots — and needed the equipment," said Alessandro Turatti, president and CEO of Turatti North America, with headquarters in Italy. "We did a unit for this company, and the company did like it very much.

"So we decided to give it a try to start promoting it and in Europe, we started to get a lot of requests. After that, we decided to launch the unit on the U.S. market."

Turatti began receiving "a lot of orders" from U.S. processors. With a cutting station composed of multiple cutting heads, the machine can center products, aligning the middle with a coring blade before rotating the products toward the blades of the cutting head and yielding curls of fruit

and vegetables in various sizes of pasta-like ribbons — from wisps like angel hair to wider cuts. Dozens of shapes and sizes are available, and customers can select the length of the noodles.

This year, Turatti Group introduced another version of the unit at United Fresh. Its Streamer Compact is designed to meet the requirements of small processors and foodservice operators. While offering the same finished product quality as the original but with a lower throughput, it can handle a wide range of product sizes ranging from thin zucchini up to large whole butternut squash. Output is high, with only the unusable top end being removed as the rest is cut into spirals.

"In Europe, the vegetable noodle product market was mostly for the carrots and zucchini, but in the United States, immediately they started to ask for sweet potatoes, for butternut squash," Turatti said.

Again responding to customer demand, Turatti Group also developed

several dedicated processing lines for fresh-cut and frozen spiralized product after it's cut, based on capacity and on the product category.

One for the fresh-cut market washes, removes moisture and then places the noodles or spirals into a bag or tray, adjusting the moisture level with special equipment. The line for frozen incorporates a blancher because "generally the frozen spiralized products are cooked briefly before getting frozen," Turatti said.

More than 100 units of the Model Streamer, which won several innovation awards, are operating worldwide, from Japan to South America. The company counts big players like Green Giant, Del Monte and Taylor Farms among its spiralizer customers.

"A lot of processors are looking at this type of product," Turatti said.

HIGH DEMAND

Germany-based Kronen also jumped on the spiralizer train when



▲ The Spirello vegetable cutting machine.
Photo: Kronen



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▲ Urschel's DiversaCut all-purpose dicer produces straight noodles from vegetables. Illustration: Urschel

it rolled out its Spirello 150 in September 2016.

"The demand for this machine was so great that 20 machines were already sold in advance," said Esther Müller of Kronen via email.

Its technology relies on different sizes of inserts to cut specific commodities

within the same machine. For example, inserts with a diameter of 35 to 90 millimeters would be employed to spiralize radishes and carrots, for example. Those with a larger diameter — 90 to 150 millimeters — would be used to cut butternut squash, kohlrabi, celeriac and the like. A seven-step

interval switch also allows the spirals to be shortened by a cutter.

"The innovative cutting principle of the machine has been further developed by our engineers in such a way that even the core of the processed products can be processed and an even higher yield is achieved," Müller said.

Addressing the system's technological benefits and limitations, Müller said the advantage is in the cutting process with its low waste.

"The restriction is in the product," she said. "Fibrous, very soft and multi-shell products such as, for example, onions can only be processed to a limited extent."

The Spirello 150 is specialized, Müller said, which means Kronen doesn't currently see how it could transfer to other applications. However, she said, "thanks to the various cutting tools, which we are constantly adapting to new market requirements, there may well be new applications that we do not even think about today."

AN ALTERNATIVE TO SPIRALIZING

Urschel Laboratories in Indiana has so far made the strategic choice to not develop a commercial spiralizer. Instead, the company is responding to growing demand by offering customers alternative technology using its DiversaCut 2110A (DCA) and Sprint 2 all-purpose dicers to produce straight noodles from vegetables that boil up to look just like regular pasta, said Urschel Vice President of Applications and New Products Mike Jacko.

"When people started calling us for true spiralized product ... we tell them we've got a different way to make it, with our dicers," said Jacko, who estimates that Urschel gets inquiries for spiralizing equipment about once a week. "We'd rather call it veggie noodles than spiralized."

Urschel Test Lab Supervisor Mark Martin estimates it was about three years ago that the company began running tests to make thin noodles out of zucchini, yellow squash, sweet potatoes and butternut squash. By adjusting the setting of the cut, the dicers can output pasta-like cuts in a variety of thicknesses.

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"You basically make long strips of carrot or zucchini or eggplant or whatever you want to make," Jacko said. "If the raw material goes in correctly, you end up with a piece of spaghetti that's really a vegetable. You cook it, you stir fry it, and you end up with something that looks like a true spiralized product."

The desired length depends on the dicer.

"The Sprint will only take product up to 6 1/2 inches, and the DCA takes up to 10 inches," Jacko said. "So if people are OK with a piece of carrot shred that's 6 1/2 inches versus 10, they can use the smaller machine. If they want longer, they have to have the DCA."

In its test lab and kitchen, Urschel runs tests for current and potential customers to verify viability. When possible, the company hosts customers on-site for these operations.

"We want to achieve their goal of cut size and give them samples, give them a detailed test report," Martin said. "We take still pictures and attach those to the report. We also do videos for our customers if they're not present, so they get an idea of what we can do."

The company also runs its own experiments. For example, when making crinkle-cut french fries, staff decided to try zucchini with a crinkle cut on two sides, with a width and thickness of 1/8 inch.

"It tastes exactly the same (as other veggie noodles) when you put marinara or alfredo sauce on it, but it has different eye appeal," Martin said. "Is it spiralized? Absolutely not. But now it has this crinkle profile to it."

"We made a plate of finished product and it twirls on the fork ... you get a different mouth feel and texture. We have had a lot of favorable responses to that."

Urschel makes the case that using a dicer to make veggie noodles offers more versatility than investing in a machine that can only spiralize.

"And a lot of customers have our (dicing) machine already, it just (becomes) a different set-up for them," Jacko said. "Basically, our machines not only will take spaghetti cuts, they'll

make square dices, french fries, sliced product — so when they're not needed for spaghetti, they can be used for any other vegetable or any other cut."

Not all commodities are suitable for veggie noodles. Jacko said that anything with a heavy seed pocket can be problematic. Think zucchini, for example.

"The squashes, the cucumbers — it's the same thing," he said. "You have to be careful with the seed pocket."

Urschel also posits that its knives making straight cuts yield a smoother

finish that will help extent shelf life.

But if a customer remains insistent on a true spiralized product, Urschel doesn't have one — yet, anyway.

"If this is something that's going to stay around and grow, can we make a machine that will spiralize better than what the other people provide? But is it worth doing?" Jacko said. "Right now it's not."

"But the Green Giants and the Del Montes of the world are using our machines, and we feel pretty good about it." P

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