



New concept gains momentum

Structured Ribs

Extending flaked-and-formed pork ribs with textured soy results in a taste and "bite" that simulates the real thing.

In the past few years, because of rising beef prices and a desire for greater menu variety, U.S. foodservice operators have inspired the development of a brand-new product—the boneless pork "rib-type" sandwich.

This is actually a new class of pork product, as opposed to more-traditional products such as roasts, chops and sausage. And, if the scene in the marketplace is any indication, this "formed pork rib" would seem to have a long and profitable future ahead.

The successful introduction of *McRib*™ by McDonald's, for example, has generated a flurry of other pork additions to both the institutional and retail markets. Central Soya Co., Inc., Fort Wayne, Ind., which has done considerable work with these formed ribs, reports at least six other "house" ribs have now been introduced. (Central Soya is one of several firms which supply structured proteins to control texture, retain juices and reduce costs in fabricated meat products.)

These flaked-and-formed, portion-controlled pork ribs can be made from ground or chopped pork. A suggested method is to flake-cut the meat while it's still partially frozen (28-30F), blend in a textured soy concentrate such as Central Soya's *Response*®, and mix 5-8 minutes or until the product blend becomes slightly tacky. At this point, your patty-like "ribs" can be pressed out

and frozen. Or, they can be char-broiled (450F for three minutes on a side, using a 3-ounce patty), and then packaged and frozen for distribution.

Almost any company that processes

er, and forming equipment.

These flaked-and-formed pork ribs should have a firm texture which suggests the texture of true pork ribs. To simulate firm, "whole-muscle" texture, you can use the same rapidly hydrating flaked protein and adjust hydration level to make the texture either firmer or softer, according to the type of pork used and its dryness.

By varying both the percentage of *Response* used, and the amount of hydration, you also can compensate for minor variations in the "bite" and fat content of the raw pork. Furthermore, since this textured protein's color is a light caramel, it will blend into the cooked patties and virtually disappear. In many cases, seasonings and/or barbecue flavors have been included in the meat blend during mixing to enhance the "pork rib's" flavor.

For processors who can't flake-cut the meat, flaked protein can add a firmer texture to ground pork. In fact, because *Response* can hold both fats and juices better than meat, it's possible to produce a structured pork rib that's both firm and juicy at the same time.



The firm texture and juicy taste of this fabricated pork rib is created by using a flake-like textured soy protein concentrate as an extender.

pork products, or even beef patties, can jump on this pork-rib trend. The technology involved has been proven already with beef products, and all the equipment needed is common to most meat operations. All you need, really, is a prebreaker to size the meat chunks for the flaker, a flake-cutter such as the Urschel Comitrol, a good mixer/blender,

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