

Process Innovations JUMPSTART OPERATIONS

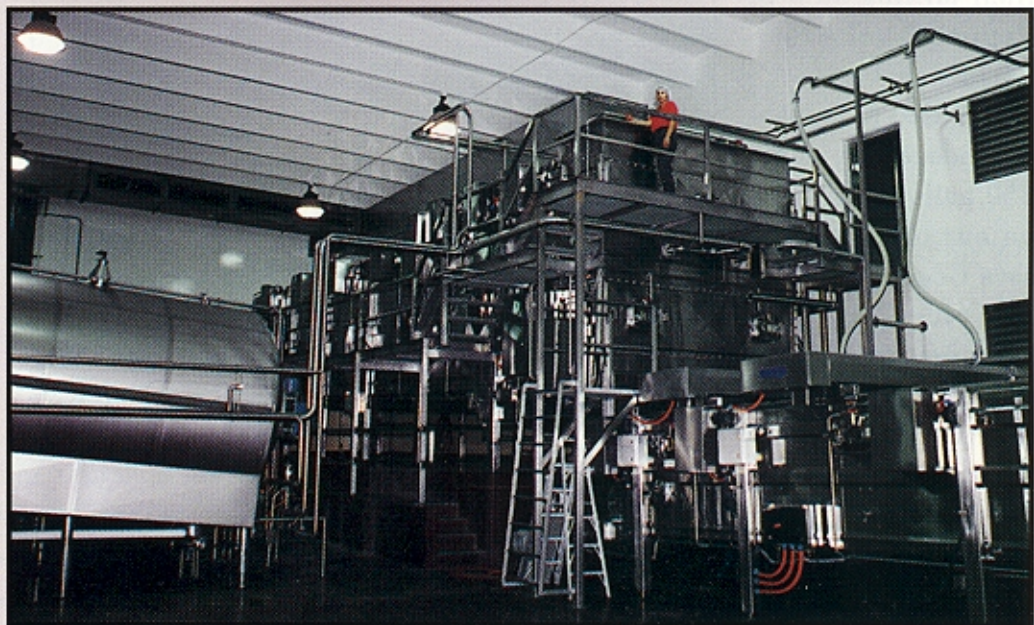
CUTTING COSTS IN FOOD MANUFACTURING FACILITIES DOES NOT MEAN CUTTING QUALITY. BY THINKING "OUTSIDE THE BOX" FOR PROCESS DESIGN AND EQUIPMENT, MANUFACTURERS ACHIEVE A BETTER BOTTOM LINE AND BETTER PRODUCTS. • STEVE BERNE, SENIOR EDITOR

Food and beverage plant spending on machinery and equipment

has increased eight of the past 10 years and is forecast to rise 3.7% annually over the next four years, according to the U.S.

Department of Commerce. This continued emphasis on new equipment versus used or refurbished machinery indicates companies are acquiring new technologies to increase labor productivity and expand their ability to develop new products, notes a Find/SVP summary of the data.

Although costs come from all parts of the operation, all parts are interrelated and influenced by their surrounding operations. Changing one piece of processing equipment can have profound effects on efficiencies up and down stream. Benefits include higher throughput per labor-hour; improved quality, consistency and material flow;



lower maintenance; better energy use; and overall improvement to the bottom line.

Some approaches include simply investing in machine upgrades, while others include in-house design and fabrication when equipment is not available.

Hot Stuff

For private-label hot sauce manufacturer, Peppers Unlimited, St. Martinsville, LA, quality and

Cheddaring operations at Darigold recently doubled without adding space, equipment or personnel. (Source: Darigold)

growth are always a hot topic. This family business recently increased its production 50% with the capacity to double again, by upgrading to Urschel Laboratories' (Valparaiso, IN) Comitrol processing units. These comminuting machines provide the final milling step in Peppers' hot sauce production.

"We used to be able to produce only about 250 gallons per hour on our old system," says George Bulliard, Jr., vice president manufacturing. "We can now 'finish' more than 1,500 gallons an hour using the Comitrols."

Peppers not only increased production, but also improved quality, lowered maintenance costs and reduced downtime. "When you run a private label business, you are under the constant scrutiny of your customers," continues Bulliard. "We used to use a traditional stone mill which had to be replaced every 20,000 gallons to maintain an acceptable quality level. This affected product consistency and added downtime and production costs that we just could not afford in our efforts to grow the business."

The company recently replaced the stone mill



State-of-the-art comminuting machines give Peppers Unlimited the potential to quadruple production to more than 1,500 gal. per hour. (Source: Urschel Laboratories Inc.)

blades come as a unit and simply bolt in and out. Even more beneficial is that we can sharpen the blades four to five times before replacing."

This simple upgrade to modernize operations allowed Peppers to grow in sales, throughput and product offerings. It now packages hot sauces under more than 50 different private labels, including Louisiana's Justin Wilson's, and exports almost 40% of its production to the Middle East.

with two automated processing units that, in series, take Peppers' aged mash to a final grind of four-thousandths of an inch.

"This finer grind prevents separation of the solids in the final products which end up in both retail and institutional markets," notes Bulliard. Improved appearance and perceived quality are major factors in consumers' initial product purchase, he said.

"In addition, we only have to sharpen the processor blades every 70,000 gallons," said Bulliard. "Downtime is minimal because the

For more information contact:

Urschel Laboratories Inc.
2503 Calumet Ave., P.O. Box 2200
Valparaiso, IN 46384-2200 U.S.A.
Phone: 219/464-4811 Fax: 219/462-3879
E-mail: info@urschel.com
Web Site: www.urschel.com