

Casebook

DICER DELIVERS PERFECT PEPPERS

Pepper Products is one of the country's largest suppliers and importers of red and green jalapeno peppers. The company, located in San Antonio, Texas, will process over 30 million pounds of peppers and onions this year for further-processors, retailers, and its own generic label. The wide-ranging applications for pepper products include salsas, cheeses, dips, stews, soups, sauces, salad dressings, relishes, chili, pizza, frozen dinners and frozen entrees.

For cutting, Pepper has chosen equipment from Urschel Laboratories, Valparaiso, Ind. The size, piece definition and color retention of the cut peppers and onions are critical to the overall appearance of the finished product. Precise cutting also contributes to the final product quality.

The company began operations in 1985 by supplying peppers and onions to a national manufacturer of picante sauce. In just a few years, Pepper Products grew and diversified by packing peppers to order in 30- and 55-gal. containers, in hot or mild, and in a choice of brine solutions.

"We take pepper development very seriously. It's the heart of what we do," says Ron Sanchez, director of operations. "We are considered a world-class supplier, having been audited and approved through multiple quality reviews by the national and international food companies we supply." Pepper Products' just-in-

time delivery systems guarantees that the "fresh" label lives up to its name. "Our label actually means the product is fresher than you can buy in the supermarket since we process it more quickly than the traditional distribution channels," says Sanchez.

The company receives peppers from Mexico and Texas, New Mexico and other states; the onions come from various western states. Fresh peppers and onions, received from the fields regularly, are inspected and audited.

On demand, peppers and onions are conveyed through a chlorinated water bath and onto custom-built inspection stations. The vegetables pass through several metal detection stations before being cut in one of five Urschel Model RA-A dicers. Then the product is loaded into 30-gal. containers for shipment.

PRECISE PARTICLE SIZE CONTROL

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SUPPLIER FACTS

Urschel Laboratories, Valparaiso, Ind., in business since 1910, supplies more than 40 different size-reduction machines. It has an in-house testing facility where customers can test-cut product at no cost or obligation. The advanced food-cutting principles developed by the company offer distinct labor and energy savings for strip cutting, slicing, milling, dicing, shredding and granulating of all types of food products.



■ **Ron Sanchez, Pepper Products' director of operations (left), likes the consistency the cutting equipment provides.**

"If we didn't have the right cutting equipment to begin with, we wouldn't be able to achieve the perception of quality on the part of consumers," says Sanchez.

"That's why we use the Urschel dicing equipment . . . because of the consistency of cut regardless of the incoming product. It does a very good job of making nice, clean cuts with tremendous production capacities. There's still excellent piece definition of the product after it is cooked, cut and packed."

The Model RA-A dicer's centrifugal cutting principle, with a wide selection of speeds and knife styles, enables the processor to slice, strip cut or dice uniformly a variety of food products. The machine yields perfectly cubed products in sizes of 1/8 to 3/8 inch. It can handle incoming products up to 4 in. in diameter. A 1/8-in. cube is the dominant cut for peppers at Pepper Products.

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