

CASE STUDY:

CREATING THE PERFECT FRESH CRINKLE CUT FRENCH FRY



We manufacture the only fresh cut, crinkle-cut fry that we know of," noted Marlis Oliver, area director, Mighty Fine Burgers Fries Shakes. "There are a lot of crinkle-cut frozen fries, and a lot of fresh-cut fries out there, but we don't know of anyone else out there who is doing a fresh-cut, crinkle-cut fry and frying them on the spot." The restaurant opened in Austin, Texas, in December 2007 and was an immediate success.

Owner Ken Schiller, a seasoned restaurant veteran who has owned four popular barbeque franchise restaurants under K&N Management for the past 13 years, wanted to put his expertise to use by starting a restaurant from the ground up. He and Oliver first started discussing this venture about five years ago. Pooling their knowledge, they decided a market existed in the Austin area for a burger/fries/shake concept. The big test was finding a way to accomplish the best French fry.

Using his existing equipment supply connections, Schiller asked them for a machine that could achieve a fresh-cut, crinkle fry.

Some suppliers came back with the answer that they did not think it could be done. Others determined that such a machine was not available. Not one to back down from a challenge, Schiller

started searching the internet, and discovered a company near Chicago in Valparaiso, Indiana called Urschel. The company's new DiversaCut SPRINT™ Dicer was in the final stages of research and development.

About a year-and-a-half ago, Schiller and Oliver travelled around the US detailing different burger establishments and Mighty Fine started taking shape. The two wanted the highest quality products for this start-up venture. They began testing products and suppliers and even opened-up a test restaurant for six-eight months to gauge customer responses.

"There are people that are huge fans of fresh crinkle cut fries," according to Schiller, "If it's frozen, it's no good." Schiller tested 13 different size fries with focus groups, and the 1/4" fresh crinkle fry was favoured.

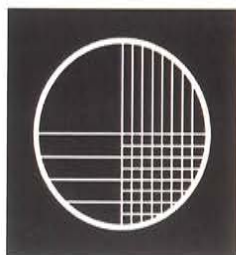
"The biggest challenge was just finding a way to do it. When we got the cost for it (the SPRINT) and learned that it was more for a manufacturing environment, a lot of people just told us to forget about it," stated Schiller. "We said we really don't care. If it can be done, we will do it. That's when we travelled to Urschel and tested fries. When we ate them, we said we're doing it [purchasing the machine]."

"We view it as part of a concept. It's not like a griddle or a freezer where it's just a tool. It's part of our signature items. It's part of the show," according to Schiller.

The SPRINT is run and displayed in a glass window. Crinkle-cut fries are processed about every hour for customers' entertainment. A recent blogger on dishola.com had the following comment: "These are some mighty fine fries. You even get to watch them being cut by a giant crinkle-cutting machine behind the glass window. I can't say these fries remind me of any other fries around. They're crinkly and not too greasy and they have that home-cooked taste."



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