

FALL 2025

western Food Processor

The magazine for food professionals & processors

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photo courtesy shutterstock.com

Slicing, Dicing, Shredding and Then Some

By Ronda Payne

Today's meat-cutting equipment brings flexibility and function to processing practices

Perhaps the only thing rising faster than business costs like labour, ingredients, borrowing, etc., is consumer demands for more value for money. This puts food processors in the middle of the pressure and means efficiency is the only predictable way to continue to grow and move ahead.

While it may seem backwards to make capital expenditures for meat cutting at a time when money is tight, purchasing new equipment that reduces waste and shifts labour to higher-value roles can be the perfect way to

create more efficiency. Companies like Urschel Canada are taking the guesswork out of finding the right equipment to do more with less by becoming a trusted partner in exploring new options.

"Processors are under more pressure than ever to maximize uptime and throughput while meeting cut quality and high sanitary standards," says Derek Lynch, director of sales for Urschel Canada. "With our new Canadian lab and service team, we're cutting response time dramatically and helping our customers stay competitive."



Urschel's is an employee-owned company that makes every machine, from the housing to intricate nuts and bolts, entirely under one roof.

Canadian Lab for Domestic Product Testing

Urschel's product testing lab in Ontario, which opened to customers in October, is an adaptable playground for processors to learn about the equipment options that can meet their needs now and into the future. Lynch says the lab can help determine the best machine to create the desired results; showcase how a more versatile machine can take on multiple tasks; explore if a larger piece of equipment can help a business scale; and more.



Derek Lynch,
director of sales
for Urschel Canada.

"The large majority of the testing we do, the customer will say something like, 'I'm trying to create a cut of meat. I don't want a cube per se, I want an elongated stick,'" Lynch elaborates.

He notes that when customers provide their parameters like size, temperature in the processing facility and volumes needed, it allows the lab team to simulate production and try various situations to come up with the best outcomes.

"We run different scenarios and come back to the customer either with a report and send them back the samples, or we could videotape it and send it back," he says. "We also do a lot of live Zoom calls for customers, or we invite them to participate and be there live and give us immediate feedback."

This on-the-fly style of testing allows for tweaking when new inspiration strikes. Perhaps it's exploring a different size or shape, or an entirely different sku. Machines can be trialed and adapted to explore potential opportunities.

"We're not just selling machines," says Lynch. "We're helping Canadian processors design better cuts, launch new skufaster, and reduce production risk."

Solid Equipment for Better Results

With sales representatives across Canada and a ready supply of replacement parts, Urschel can keep machinery running while maintaining the precision cuts, sanitary design and high-capacity throughput the company has been known for, for decades. Some of the technology includes products specific to dicing or strip cutting raw and cooked meat; processing for pâtés and sauces; small-space multi-protein cutting; and adaptable systems for a range of cut styles with minimal downtime.

"Whether you're producing diced ham, ground beef blends, jerky strips, or protein slurries, Urschel has a proven solution to meet your production goals," Lynch says.



Another of Urschel's benefits is that the employee-owned company makes every machine, from the housing to intricate nuts and bolts, entirely under one roof.

This in-house development of machinery matches customer needs as the company looks at pain points and explores better ways to address them. He suggests an example of this where a customer working with chicken breasts wants to reduce fines. With Urschel's precision cuts, fines are kept to a minimum when the right machine for the job is discovered.

"You could throw that in a really beastly machine and get some good cuts, but get a lot of fines," he explains. "Or we could put in a machine setup that would handle it more gently, maybe a little slower. We would get much better cuts and less stuff that you have to throw away or recycle."

Modern Developments and Options

Precision like this is important as it reduces food waste, ensures a consistent customer-facing product and generates a higher volume of saleable food. But ensuring sanitation and ease of cleaning matters as well. Urschel equipment uses hinged panels where possible to allow for ease of access to safe and thorough cleaning to meet government safety standards and reduce cleaning time.

More and more manufacturers are offering better sanitary designs with smoother surfaces, easier access and fewer points where food waste can build up. Many also offer tool-free disassembly to round out the ease and functionality that speeds up processes and reduces labour requirements.

Some companies offer machines that include lasers and cameras to scan meat portions to optimize cuts that reduce waste and provide greater consistency. Others offer intuitive computerized dashboards that allow for changes,



The M VersaPro Dicer, or MVP for short, offers 33% increased feeding capacity due to wider belts, optimized cutting, and increased horsepower. The MVP provides the best in sanitary design and the ultimate in the versatile cutting of proteins.

reporting and enhanced planning. Some even include remote programming.

Going Ultrasonic

Although mechanical blades are still the standard for most meat products, ultrasonic cutting is making its way onto the processing floor. It's not the ideal choice for large or bone-in cuts, but it performs exceedingly well in processed food applications where very thin or precise cuts are necessary or on gummy foods.

Ultrasonic sounds space-aged, but it still incorporates a metal knife (sometimes called a sonotrode) in the equipment. The difference between ultrasonic and traditional machinery is that the sonotrode, or horn, vibrates at a high (ultrasonic) frequency to reduce the friction often accompanying dense or sticky foods like cheese, pastries or sweets. It saws through the food at high speed, rather than pushing through. This ensures a clean cut with less adhesion of food to the blade.

While it found its home in other food segments, ultrasonic's clean blade cutting is appealing with managing high-fat content meats like cold cuts, pates or bacon. It's also useful when cutting meat at a range of temperatures from frozen to cooked without the typical tearing, sticking or breaking that can happen with a traditional metal blade.

The result can be a cleaner, more precise cut ideal for food presentation in single portions, prepared meals and other customer-facing applications. But the precision and elimination of food sticking to the blade also reduces down time, cleaning up and food waste.

A sound business decision comes from understanding what new meat-cutting equipment is intended to do and finding a partner who can demonstrate options and troubleshoot to ensure that desired outcome is attainable. While the outcome includes the appearance of the end product, it also needs to consider waste, cleanup, adaptability to existing processes and systems and flexibility for the future. **WFP**

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