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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Supporting the potato industry worldwide

Issue 4 • Volume 34 • 2026

POTATOEUROPE 
GERMANY 2026

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Urschel: “A New Entry Point to the Urschel Dicing Ecosystem”

Urschel recently introduced the **Little Gem Aspire™** Dicer as a new entry point in its dicing portfolio, targeting small- to medium-scale processors and high-bulk-density applications including potatoes. Following the launch, Potato Processing International spoke with Scott Klockow, Director of Applications and Product Development, and Tristan Scoble, Sales Director at Urschel, about where the machine fits within an industrial processing operation, how its StatiCut™ cutting system differs from conventional dicing technology, and what processors should consider when assessing performance, integration requirements and total cost of ownership.

**By Scott Klockow, Director of Applications and Product Development, Urschel
Tristan Scoble, Sales Director, Urschel**

Now that the Little Gem Aspire has been introduced to the market, which processor profiles and production applications represent the clearest fit for the machine?

The Little Gem Aspire™ Dicer (Little Gem) suits small-to-medium processors excelling in high-bulk-density produce applications, including potatoes. Processors will benefit from the StatiCut™ knife assembly, built with specialty knives for quick transitions between cut sizes.

How should processors distinguish the Little Gem Aspire from Urschel's other compact and intermediate-capacity dicing solutions?

As a new entry point to the Urschel dicing ecosystem, the Little Gem combines a compact footprint with a patent-pending StatiCut knife assembly to deliver continuous precision cutting at a lower overall cost of ownership, from initial purchase through ongoing production.



What product dimensions, physical characteristics and preparation conditions define the machine's optimal operating window?

The Little Gem accommodates a large range of small-to-medium high-bulk density applications and cut sizes across an assortment of produce. With limited parts to inventory and expedited changeover times, the dicer offers durability and longevity in rugged production environments.

“Processors can expect savings over the long life of the machine.”

How does the cutting action of the StatiCut assembly differ from the operating principles used in conventional dicing systems?

The innovative StatiCut knife assembly, used in place of the traditional circular knife design found in conventional dicing systems, gently cuts product in a compact space, making it a transformative development in food processing. The durable StatiCut assembly features rapid changeovers with minimal tools, lowering the overall cost of ownership throughout the long life of the machine.

What engineering trade-offs had to be considered when developing a system with fewer cutting components and a more compact cutting zone?

The Little Gem is the product of over 100 years of Urschel precision cutting expertise. Engineered by the Urschel Innovation and Development (I&D) department for a low overall cost of ownership, the dicer employs patented Urschel technology designed through extensive R&D. Urschel

I&D, alongside Urschel engineering and manufacturing teams, have invested quality resources and collaborated with customers worldwide to bring the new Little Gem to life.

Which measurements did Urschel use to validate cut quality during development—for example, cut-size distribution, breakage, cell damage, juice loss or percentage of in-spec product?

Urschel prioritizes real-world experience to validate and expand on lab findings for cut quality. After completing initial testing through internal engineering methods, Urschel conducted blind customer comparisons in production environments to further confirm cut quality.

Potatoes and sweet potatoes can vary according to variety, solids content, storage history, temperature and firmness. How does the Little Gem respond to these differences in raw material?

Urschel designed the Little Gem with paramount versatility to meet the challenges of today's potato and sweet potato processors, gently cutting firm, fresh crops and malleable, PEF products to achieve a range of styles and shapes. Quick changes can be made to best match product input. As the global leader in food cutting technology, Urschel offers complimentary test cutting services to determine the optimal machine setup for your production line.

How should processors interpret the machine's capacity? Which product and line variables have the greatest effect on achievable throughput?

Urschel encourages processors to take advantage of its complimentary test-cutting services, which reflect individual processing needs and support informed capital purchase decisions. Test-cutting services are available at Urschel global headquarters in the U.S. and at

key locations worldwide. Appointments can be scheduled through a local Urschel sales contact.

What cut sizes and configurations are currently available, and what is involved in changing from one product specification to another?

Cut sizes include slices from 2 mm to 20 mm, strips, and dices up to 20 mm. StatiCut knives may be removed to increase cut width or create a range of patterns. Changeovers can be made quickly with minimal tools.

How does the Little Gem need to be fed and discharged to maintain consistent cutting performance and prevent the compact cutting system from becoming constrained by upstream or downstream equipment?

The Little Gem is designed with small-to-medium processes in mind, with specific measurements dependent on customer specifications. The machine is conveyor- and hand-fed and discharges into bins or totes. A steady, continuous stream of input helps maximize precision cutting, and the discharge area should remain clear to limit product buildup. Processors should take advantage of complimentary test-cutting services to determine the optimal machine setup for their production goals.

“A steady, continuous stream of input helps maximize precision cutting.”

Which design features simplify cleaning, inspection and sanitation, and what components must be removed or accessed during a routine



cleaning procedure?

The Little Gem features a robust cantilever dicing unit with angled sheet metal that disassembles easily with minimal tools. Sanitary design principles are incorporated throughout to support processors' routine cleaning procedures, and the StatiCut assembly allows for simpler maintenance than a traditional high-capacity dicer.

Urschel positions the machine around a low total cost of ownership. Beyond the initial purchase price, where should processors expect the most meaningful savings—in labor, parts inventory, knife requirements, energy use, maintenance or downtime?

Processors can expect savings over the long life of the machine. The StatiCut assembly requires one less spindle to maintain, and its consumable knives cost a fraction of standard circular

knives. Labor savings are also evident, as changeovers and knife replacements occur less frequently than with a circular knife design. Two of the three-dimensional cuts require no added cost or tooling to change, and the third crosscut costs significantly less. Slicing is a simple dial-in procedure, and the Little Gem runs on a single-phase motor with lower utility costs.

What did prototype testing and customer evaluation reveal that caused Urschel to change or refine the machine before its commercial launch?

Urschel dedicated several years to testing and refining multiple iterations of the Little Gem in order to meet Urschel quality standards. The machine reached commercial launch at its seventh iteration, C7, after fully incorporating valued input from customers worldwide throughout development.

As processors begin using the Little Gem in production, which additional applications, knife configurations or developments could eventually broaden the platform?

Urschel continues to expand on machinery currently implemented in the field to support both new and long-term customers. Constant iterations of the Little Gem are currently being explored to further support the global food processing community as production requirements evolve. •

“Changeovers can be made quickly with minimal tools.”